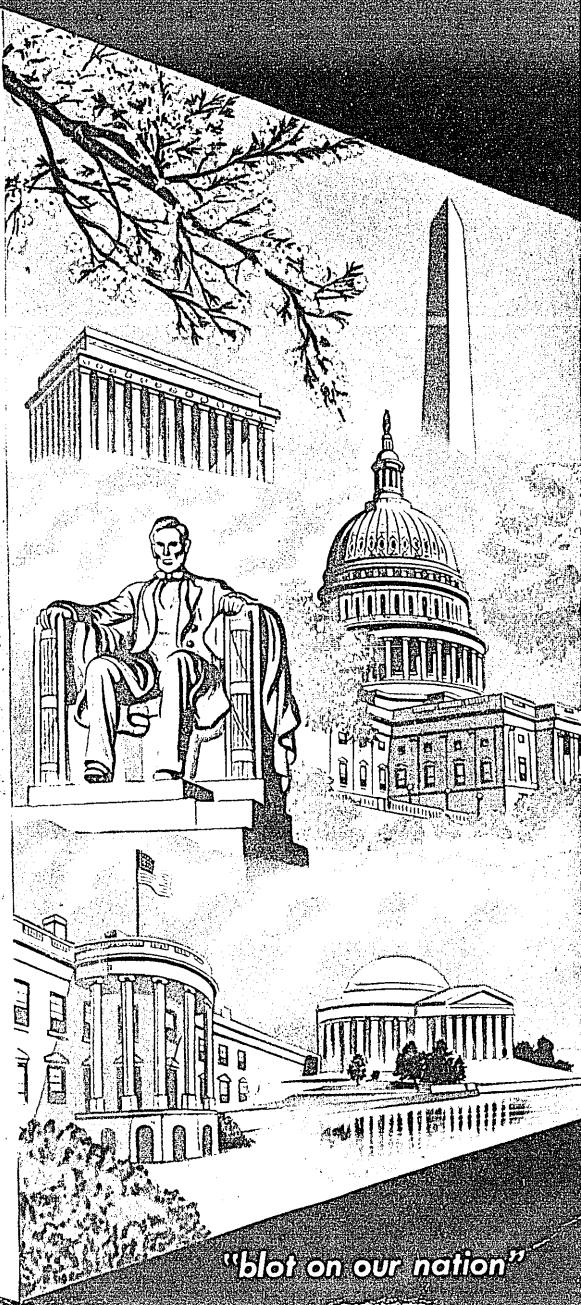


SEGREGATION IN WASHINGTON

NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON
SEGREGATION IN THE
NATION'S CAPITOL



"blot on our nation"

SEGREGATION IN WASHINGTON

**A Report of
The National Committee on
Segregation in The Nation's Capital**

November, 1948

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This is a condensed summary of the research findings of the National Committee on Segregation in the Nation's Capital. The study was conducted by a research sub-committee under instruction to investigate the conditions and causes of segregation in Washington. Its staff of investigators and research analysts prepared the basic monographs from which this summary has been drafted. The research monographs and original documentation are on file in the offices of the National Committee.

The National Committee on Segregation in the Nation's Capital

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Table of Contents

	Page
CHAPTER 1	
The Nation's Capital	1
CHAPTER 2	
Symbol of Democracy	4
CHAPTER 3	
A Walk About Town	11
CHAPTER 4	
The Growth of Prejudice	18
CHAPTER 5	
Ghettos in the Capital	21
CHAPTER 6	
Segregation, Inc.	30
CHAPTER 7	
Negroes Are Americans	39
CHAPTER 8	
The Human Wreckage	48
CHAPTER 9	
A Colored Horatio Alger	54
CHAPTER 10	
Uncle Sam's Example	60
CHAPTER 11	
Shape of the Future	75
CHAPTER 12	
When the Flag Goes Up	82
Epilogue	91

"The capital of a nation, though it may lie, as ours does, at the level of the sea, must be in a very true sense, a city that is set on a hill and which cannot be hid. In the nature of things, it draws to itself the eyes not only of its own people, but, if it be the capital of a great nation, as ours is, the eyes of the whole world . . . This Capital of Capitals should be no mean city. . . . Whether we will it so or not, it will become a symbol—a symbol of the great Republic whose visible throne is here. . . . It is wisdom, then, to see that the symbol shall be worthy of the love and veneration it expresses . . ."

*Mr. Justice Wendell Phillips Stafford
of the Supreme Court of the District
of Columbia, February 27, 1913*

Chapter 1



The Nation's Capital

. . . the city, not of a state, not of a district, but of a nation.

Supreme Court of the United States¹

A Planned Capital

The capital of the greatest free nation in the world lies along the Potomac on a site chosen by George Washington under authority granted by the first Congress. It is different from other capitals.

London and Paris and Moscow grew by themselves, and are cities for various causes. But before our capital existed, its coming was anticipated. Under the Constitution, its future government was placed in the hands of Congress in trust for all the people.

The Congress shall have power . . . to exercise exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever over such district (not exceeding ten miles square) as may, by cession of the particular states and the acceptance of Congress, become the seat of government of the United States.

*Constitution of the United States
Article 1, Section 8*

Except as the Nation's Capital, Washington has no reason for existence. Even before it had a name, it was planned as the Federal City. It was laid out by Pierre L'Enfant, who dreamed of a capital "magnificent enough to grace a great nation".

City of Magnificent Distances

At first it was nothing but farm and pasture, bought for \$66 an acre. A place on Jenkins Hill was picked for the Capitol building. A mile and a half northwest was located the site for the future White House. Where surveyors' lines met drawn west and south from these points was fixed the place for Washington's Monument.

On the basis of this triangle, a city was staked out. The grand radiating avenues, 160 feet wide, were named by Thomas Jefferson for the different states. With impressive settings and long sweeping prospects, the plan was boldly conceived for the capital of the new and untried nation.

¹ *Grether v. Wright* (1896), 75 Fed. 742, 756.

For many years there was a noticeable gap between the proportions of the plan and physical reality. In 1842, Charles Dickens wrote about the "spacious avenues that begin in nothing and lead nowhere; streets a mile long that only want houses, roads, and inhabitants". Washington was known in some mockery as the "City of Magnificent Distances".

No Physical Gap Today

There is no physical gap today. The city has grown into all the greatness planned for it. It numbers over a million people, and sprawls beyond the confines of the original ten miles square into Virginia and Maryland. One writer has described it as the great seal of the United States set down in granite.¹

The original triangle has been filled with monumental government buildings. To the Washington Monument have been added the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials, and lesser shrines by the score. Here is the visible evidence of our national strength and power and faith.

In this environment, the laws are made for the whole nation. Here they are executed and interpreted. Here live our President, Congressmen, and highest Judges. And each year more than three times a million visitors come to the city from over the nation.

In the Name of the People

Some of the visitors are high school students, who want to round out their course in civics and history. Some are war veterans, come to see what they fought for. Some are young. Some are old. They come singly, by family carload, by train and bus and plane. But they have one thing in common. Here, of all places, they expect to see democracy in action.

In Washington is bred a new pride or a new cynicism, a brighter sense of what America stands for, or a new callousness. Here each person sees a part of himself. In the capital, if nowhere else, the promise of America must be measured by the fact.

What is the fact? There is a gap in Washington which has not been closed; distances which are not magnificent.

BLOT ON OUR NATION

You call this the land of liberty . . .

John Randolph

The Curse of Slavery

In the days when the nation was cursed by slavery, the capital was on the conscience of both North and South. Slave-owner John Randolph rose in his place in the House of Representatives to say:

¹ Perry, G. S., *Cities of America*, Saturday Evening Post, 219:14-15, Oct. 5, 1946.

You call this the land of liberty, and every day that passes things are done in it at which the despotisms of Europe would be horror-struck and disgusted. . . . In no part of the earth—not excepting the rivers on the Coast of Africa, was there so great, so infamous a slave market, as in the metropolis, in the seat of government of this nation which prides itself on its freedom.

Henry Clay, himself a slave-owner, hoped the time would come when Congress would abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, and "sweep from our capital that foul blot on our nation".

Petitions Filed in Congress

It was on this issue that the anti-slavery forces concentrated their strategy. For it was in the capital that slavery was most vulnerable, and in the capital that Congress had full power to act.

As early as 1828, a thousand citizens signed a petition asking Congress to abolish slavery in the District. In a few years, John Quincy Adams began filing so many petitions in the House that the famous "gag rule" was passed in a futile effort to stop him.

Year after year, in each succeeding session of Congress, Adams kept offering the petitions of outraged citizens. Gradually the majorities against him decreased until finally, in 1844, the gag rule was repealed. The entire nation was aroused.

Congress Abolishes Slavery

In the Compromise of 1850, the South agreed to the abolition of the slave trade in the District. But then the lines tightened for war. Finally in March of 1862, before Lincoln had drafted his Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, Congress passed a bill to free all the slaves in Washington.

While the Emancipation Act lay on the President's desk for him to approve or veto, Senator Sumner came to call. Carl Sandburg has described the scene:

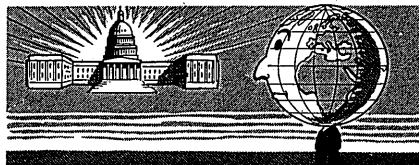
"Do you know who is at this moment the largest slaveholder in the United States?" Senator Sumner asked the President. And Sumner answered, "It is Abraham Lincoln, for he holds all three thousand slaves of the District of Columbia, which is more than any other person in the district holds."¹

It has been eighty-six years since Abraham Lincoln signed the bill abolishing slavery in the capital. The three thousand have grown to over two hundred and fifty thousand. They walk the streets of the city. But are they free?

Have we swept from our capital "*that foul blot on our nation?*"

¹ Sandburg, Carl, "The War Years," 1939, Vol. I, p. 577.

Chapter 2



Symbol of Democracy

I would rather be an Untouchable in the Hindu caste system than a Negro in Washington.

A Visitor from India, 1948

In the eighty-six years since the abolition of slavery, Washington has become the most important capital on earth. It is the great stage of world events, and the curtain is always up on the play entitled: "Democracy In Action."

Democracy's Great Stage

How do we look across the footlights to the rest of the world? Even if we wished, we could not dim the lights or lower the curtain. In 1947 the following item appeared in a Washington newspaper:

RUSSIAN NEWSPAPER HITS TREATMENT OF NEGROES HERE

(By the Associated Press)

Moscow, Aug. 21—The newspaper "Trud" said today that Negroes in Washington were "prohibited from attending movies, restaurants, barber shops and beaches where whites were present."

"Let us remember this is all taking place in the city which, according to the reference books,

has the residence of the President and the Capitol building in which Congress sits," the article continued.

Trud asked: "Will Washington 'democrats' dare restrict the Liberian Ambassador to movies and restaurants only in the Negro ghetto?"¹

The Voice of America

Each year Congress appropriates money for "Voice of America" broadcasts to counteract Russian propaganda abroad. But the great voice of America is our capital, and it speaks for us directly to a world audience that is only one-third white.

Diplomats of sixty nations live in the city, and not all of them are light-skinned. The Latin American embassies and legations alone account

¹ Washington Evening Star, Aug. 21, 1947. (The answer to Trud's last question is, with occasional exceptions, "yes.")

for more than 1,500 foreign residents. As the spokesman of world democracy, Washington is host to a constant procession of special missions arriving from all continents to seek economic, military, and cultural agreements.

Is there any difficulty about the Liberian Minister going to the movies?

What Are the Facts?

Our government privately admits considerable trouble in the reception of visiting dignitaries from certain African and Caribbean countries. "It is often impossible to get them into a white hotel," said a State Department official. "The problem of eating and attending the theater can be very embarrassing. Fortunately, by the time they attain important rank, they are well acquainted with conditions and try to avoid difficulty."

But problems frequently arise. The following incidents are typical:

During the war, the Foreign Minister of an African country was invited to Washington by the State Department, which made hotel reservations in advance. He arrived late at night, however, and the hotel manager flatly refused to admit him. A high official of the Department was routed out of bed, and persuaded the hotel by telephone to admit the Foreign Minister—on a plea of urgent "war necessity". (Case G-103)

An influential Puerto Rican Senator comes to Washington frequently to see the Resident Commissioner, who must devise ways to provide him with room and meals. On one visit a private family in Alexandria gave him shelter. On another, a Puerto Rican newspaper correspondent took him to his home. On a third, the Commissioner was not able to find private quarters and asked the Senator to sleep on the couch in his office. (Case 98)

Some Visitors Are Chaperoned

On occasion, the State Department has sent vigorous protests to certain nations which attempt to restrict the movements of our representatives abroad. But Washington is the only major capital in the world where it is necessary to chaperon foreign guests to protect them from insult on account of color. The following incident occurred not long ago:

A distinguished Bolivian educator was invited to Washington by the State Department on a good will tour. He had the dark Indian complexion typical of his countrymen, and was closely attended by an American official, who made arrangements for his hotel accommodations, meals, shopping, etc. One night, however, left to his own devices, he went out for a stroll and decided to stop at a restaurant for something to eat. Refused service, he returned to his hotel in great indignation and protested to the State Department. Apologies were offered. (Case 8)

An Unfortunate Incident

Foreign diplomats are very sensitive to the color bar in Washington. An international incident occurred on September 13, 1948, when the Ethiopian Minister to the United States was asked to change his seat in Constitution Hall during a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Apparently there was a mixup in tickets, but the Minister left the hall in anger, thinking he was being segregated because of his color. Before an investigation could be made, the following note of protest was received by the State Department:

The Ethiopian government considers the offense to its accredited representative as grave and prone to create serious implications, especially so because the offense occurred in a public place and in the presence of the President of the United States.

The Imperial Ethiopian Legation, therefore, demands that the United States government take appropriate measures to repair the damage and to punish the offender in the manner that the dignity and inviolability of an envoy representing a sovereign government requires.*

Costumes and Diplomatic Passes

Most of the capital's stores and eating places are alert to the importance of distinguishing between American Negroes and foreigners of dark complexion, so as to treat the latter like white persons. For example:

A Hindu and his wife were shopping one afternoon in a five-and-ten cent store. The woman stopped at the soda fountain and ordered a cup of tea. The clerk, misjudging her racial identity despite the fact that she was dressed in Indian costume, refused to take the order, stating that Negroes were not served. When the couple explained they were from India, apologies were offered and the tea was served. (Case 110)

Often an alien Negro will be allowed to eat sitting down at a lunch counter if he has a diplomatic pass, or some other means of proving that he is not an American Negro.

Four Negro students from the British West Indies sat at a downtown lunch counter. The waitress informed them they would have to stand to be served. But when they produced their British diplomatic passes, she apologized, remarking she didn't realize they were "not niggers". (Case 152)

Subterfuges Are Employed

To avoid humiliations on account of their color, many foreign visitors stay indoors and avoid public places. Occasionally, however, subterfuges are employed. These include the conspicuous use of a foreign language to avoid being identified as an American Negro:

A Spanish lady was asked to entertain the daughter of the Minister of Education of a Central American republic, who was visiting Washington under official auspices. The guest was colored, and when she expressed a desire to see the film "Great Expectations", a hurried conference ensued. It was decided by her friends not to tell her about the practice of segregation, but to try to maneuver her into the theater. As the party approached the box office, everybody talked loudly in Spanish. The strategy was successful, and she slipped past. (Case 55)

* The American Association for the Advancement of Science extended an apology.

The Brotherhood of Man

The exclusion of Negro Catholics from "white" Catholic churches is one of the most disturbing aspects of segregation which Latin Americans find in Washington:

A devout Catholic from Panama entered a Catholic church in Washington. As he knelt at prayer, a priest approached him and handed him a slip of paper. On the paper was the address of a Negro Catholic church. The priest explained that there were special churches for Negro Catholics, and that he would be welcome there. (Case 134)

The Canon of Washington Cathedral (Episcopal) has appealed to the nation for funds to complete a building program, saying that the capital possesses no physical "symbol for the sovereignty of God".¹ But inside the largest churches, Protestant as well as Catholic, visitors are made unwelcome on account of color. Segregation is the public policy of such Christian organizations as the YMCA:

A group of 29 students at Ohio State University, sixteen of whom were from such countries as India, Brazil, Argentina, Turkey, Norway, and China, visited Washington during their spring vacation in 1947. The object of the trip, arranged by the University YMCA, was to give the foreign students a chance to see the U. S. capital. The Washington YMCA and YWCA accepted reservations, but upon discovering that Negroes were included, insisted that they be housed in their segregated branches. Not wishing to explain matters to the foreign students, the leaders of the group managed to find lodging for everybody at Slowe and Carver Halls, dormitories built to house Negro war workers. (Case 65)

Test of Our Faith

Few Americans appreciate what a shock Washington can be to visitors from abroad. It is to them, even more than to most of us, the symbol of America. It is where they deal with America. It is the environment in which they judge our principles by our performance and match our actions to our words.

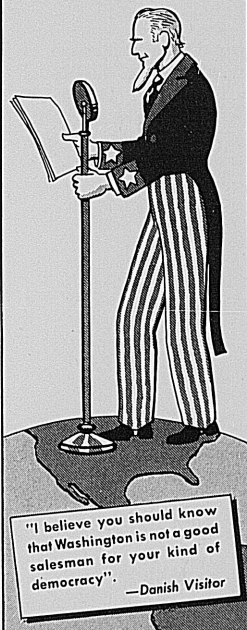
The promises we have made to ourselves are published in many documents. The words of the Declaration of Independence that all men are created equal, with certain inalienable rights, have stood the fire of civil war and have been made explicit in the constitutional amendments against discrimination on account of race or color.

Our World Promises

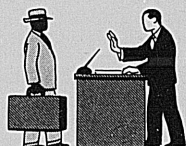
We have also made many promises to the world. After the defeat of Hitler, the victorious powers agreed at Berlin to enforce the following terms on the defeated enemy:

¹ Reported in Lohman, J. D., and Embree, E. R., *The Nation's Capital*, Survey Graphic, Vol. 36, No. 1, Jan., 1947.

WE PREACH DEMOCRACY TO THE WORLD—



BUT WE PRACTICE IT IN NATION'S CAPITAL WITH EXAMPLES LIKE THESE —



African foreign minister refused admittance to a white hotel.



Bolivian educator refused service in a chain restaurant.



* Hindu woman refused service at a soda fountain.



West Indian students forced to stand at counter.



Panama visitor asked to leave a white church.



Puerto Rican senator forced to sleep on couch in government office.

* Dark-skinned foreigners are often embarrassed

OUR WORLD PROMISES



All Nazi race, creed, or political discrimination shall be abolished.

—Berlin Agreement, 1945



World peace necessitates elimination of racial and religious distinctions.

—Act of Chapultepec, 1945



"We fought for dignity of the individual".
—Secretary of State Marshall, Rio de Janeiro, 1947

All Nazi laws which . . . established discrimination on grounds of race, creed or political opinion shall be abolished. No such discriminations, whether legal, administrative or otherwise, shall be tolerated.

Berlin Agreement, 1945

Can we have lower standards for Washington?

In subscribing to the United Nations Charter, we pledged ourselves to "promote respect for, and the observance of, human rights and fundamental freedom for all without distinction as to race". And by the Act of Chapultepec, in 1945, we agreed with the countries of Latin America to the following article:

The world's peace cannot be consolidated until men are able to exercise their basic rights without distinction as to race or religion.

As Others See Us

Sometimes it pays to see ourselves as others see us. Those who come here from foreign lands to consolidate the peace are disposed to be friendly. Most of them are eager to express their admiration for certain features of American life. They agree with what Secretary of State Marshall said at Rio de Janeiro in 1947: "We fought for the dignity of the individual."

But the reaction of foreign visitors to racial segregation in Washington is so uniformly negative that the following statement may be considered as typical of their attitude. It is part of a letter received from a Danish official who recently spent several months in Washington on a mission for his King:

LETTER FROM A DANISH VISITOR

Before coming to America, I had heard and read about your racial problem, and I remember being mildly puzzled by this apparent inconsistency in your democratic ideals. But I am afraid that I was quite unprepared for what I saw in Washington.

In New York, and on the railway between there and Washington, I do not recall seeing any signs of racial distinction, though I was later told that they were not absent. On the sidewalks and street-railways of Washington, too, people of both races mingle freely. But I ate my first Washington meal in a drug store, and I was horrified to hear the counterwoman who served me tell a Negro: "We don't serve you people here."

As I visited your government offices in the weeks that followed, I gradually became aware that Negroes were employed there almost solely in menial capacities, mostly as messengers, or very low clerks, and in a few departments were not to be seen at all. I noticed that no Negroes stayed in my hotel, dined at the restaurants, or attended the theaters, and learned that the proprietors of these places refuse to serve them. Even in one of the largest department stores, for the first time in my life I saw the sign "Colored" on the door of the toilet. . . .

Of course I was introduced to many other visitors to your country, and this question came often into our conversations. One Czech acquaintance told me that most of the Negroes in Washington live in special sections of the city - "Nazi ghettos", he called them - and I myself saw in the course of my work that even in the new public housing projects the segregation was complete . . .

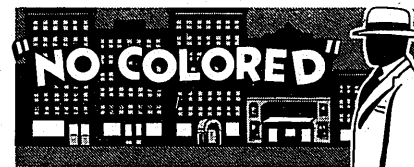
One of my acquaintances, a Swede, expressed well my opinion when he asked: "Cannot you Americans even make your capital city into a model of what your nation professes to be?" Some of my European acquaintances even made unfavorable comparisons between Washington and Moscow, simply because your racial practices shocked them so strongly.

Whenever a citizen of any prominence returns to my country after a visit to the United States, he is interviewed as he steps off the ship. He is always asked a great many questions about the United States - and the newspapers print these interviews because their readers want to know about America. Frankly, I heard about Washington's racial discrimination long before I arrived there, in just that way. It is no exaggeration to say that most of our people who come to your capital go home with what you call "a bad taste in their mouths" for that reason. And it is not only they who are affected. Your racisms become public knowledge.

In real humility, I say that I do not believe that you Americans should decide your destiny in accordance with our wishes. But I believe you should know that Washington today, despite its great outward beauty, is not a good "salesman" for your kind of democracy.¹

¹ Document 67. (A letter from a foreign visitor to a friend in America.)

Chapter 3



A Walk About Town

Sir: . . . No one wishes more than I do to see such proofs as you exhibit, that Nature has given to our black brethren talents equal to those of other colors of men, and that the appearance of a want of them is owing only to the degraded condition of their existence, both in Africa and America . . .

*Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Banneker
Letter of August, 1791*

We have seen what the Nation's Capital means to every citizen, and to all the people of the world. But there is a specially interested party, the American Negro. In practice, what does segregation in Washington mean to him?

Introducing Benjamin Banneker

Benjamin Banneker, a free American Negro, was appointed by President George Washington to serve on the L'Enfant Commission for the surveying and laying out of the capital. He was a mathematician, naturalist, and something of a philosopher.

If Banneker should visit Washington today, he could stand on the steps of the Capitol Building on old Jenkins Hill, and look west down the Mall to the Washington Monument rising in white marble to the sky. Beyond the reflecting pool, in a position of equal honor, he could see the pillars erected to a man named Lincoln who freed his race.

Since he helped lay out the city, he might recognize the angle of Pennsylvania Avenue. And yet, if he walked down the street and about the town, like the recent visitor from Denmark, there would be things he would not understand.

Appearance of Equality

On the sidewalks and street-railways of Washington . . . people of both races mingle freely.

Danish Visitor

At first glance, Benjamin Banneker would rejoice at the appearance of equality. Some people say that Washington is a "southern city", but the southern pattern of Jim Crow transportation does not exist in the

city. It was abolished by Act of Congress in 1863, the year after the slaves were freed.

Nowhere in Washington do people meet on closer terms than in the crowded street-cars and buses. Nowhere is the mixing of the races less voluntary, or more imposed by government policy. Nowhere do the physical circumstances seem more unfavorable.

Yet people get along. No one proposes that the races be segregated. On a street-car or bus, by law and custom, the Negro is the equal of the white man and his fare will buy him any seat he can find.

A Strange Exception

Benjamin Banneker might note an exception. While the Negro is the equal of the white man as a paying passenger, he is not his equal as a paid employee on the same street-car or bus. He won't be hired as a motorman or conductor under any circumstances.

During the war, the capital's public transportation system was slowed down for lack of white operating employees. The local transit company advertised for workers (white only) in cities two hundred miles away, and even recruited government clerks on a part-time basis. But the company and the union both opposed the employment of available colored operators, claiming that racial outbreaks would occur.

The city exhibits a strange paradox. One reason why the races have been jammed together so closely on the undermanned street-cars and buses of the capital is the belief that a single Negro employee will not be tolerated on the platform.

Our visiting 18th century Negro, who accurately calculated the solar eclipse of 1789, might conclude that a colored man is the equal of a white man in the capital today when it comes to taking his money, but not when it comes to paying it out to him in wages. But this rule is also subject to qualifications.

The Problem of Eating

I ate my first Washington meal in a drug store, and I was horrified to hear the counterman who served me tell a Negro: "We don't serve you people here."

Danish Visitor

If Benjamin Banneker should reach Washington around noon, he would have difficulty finding a place to eat. In the entire downtown area, there is practically no place that would serve him, except the government building cafeterias and the Union Station. Not even white friends could get him into the YMCA Coffee Shop.*

If he were an alien Negro, he would be eligible as a guest in the House and Senate restaurants. But being an American Negro, he would be excluded. He might have the following experience:

* Negroes may eat at the YWCA Cafeteria.

A distinguished Negro educator was invited to eat in the House restaurant. One of the southern representatives, seeing him there, approached and asked, "Sir, are you a colored man?" On receiving an affirmative reply, he pressed, "Are you an American colored man?" When the Negro again said "yes", the southern Congressman announced, "Then you can't eat here." (Case 155)

What Banneker Might Conclude

At lunch counters in certain downtown "dime" stores, delicatessens, and drug stores, Negroes will be served in a standing position. But they will not be served at a table, or even seated at a counter, unless they have some means of establishing foreign citizenship.

The color bar of the downtown restaurants is so well known to most Negroes that they don't try to eat in them. Occasionally, however, visitors come to the capital who are not forewarned, and here is the kind of thing that happens to them—as related by a young colored woman:

About two weeks ago, two of my friends and I went into a restaurant on Vermont Avenue to eat lunch. As soon as we sat down, all of the white people started staring at us and laughing as though we were crazy. The man behind the counter looked at us and started laughing, too, but no one said anything to us.

Finally, the man behind the counter came up to us and said, "I'm sorry but I can't serve you girls sitting down." We asked how he expected to serve us then—standing up? Then he told us he couldn't serve us at all. We got up and left then, feeling very embarrassed. (Case 158)

After a few experiences of this kind, our 18th century visitor might conclude that the objection is not always to the Negro but to the American Negro. And not necessarily to the Negro's patronage, nor always to him eating in the same room with white people, but to him eating in a place where there are no facilities for him to eat standing up.

The Problem of a Room

I noticed that no Negroes stayed in my hotel, dined at the restaurants, or attended the theaters, and learned that the proprietors of these places refuse to serve them.

Danish Visitor

By the time Banneker found something to eat, he would be tired and ready to look for a hotel room. But here again he would have difficulties.

Washington has many fine hotels, and they exist because the presence of the Federal government in the city attracts people from every part of the country and from all parts of the world. If the government would move away, they would close their doors tomorrow.

Yet instead of serving all citizens of the United States, these hotels bar colored visitors to the capital and often force white visitors to choose between seeing Washington on an undemocratic basis or not at all. It is a choice that sometimes causes disappointment.

Schoolboys Are Disappointed

On May 14, 1948, for example, the following news item appeared on the front page of the New York Times:

RACE BIAS IN WASHINGTON DEPRIVES 51 YOUNGSTERS OF TRIP TO CAPITAL

Long-cherished dreams of passing a few hours among the tokens of freedom and historical attractions of the nation's capital were shattered yesterday for fifty-one New York children by Negro segregation and discrimination rules as practiced in Washington. All of the youngsters were medal winners in the safety patrol contests in the New York metropolitan area . . .

Among the youths designated to share in the safety honors were four Negro children. . . . When the Automobile Club sought accommodations for them with their white companions, the Washington hotel doors were closed to them. This action caused the cancellation of the junket yesterday. A special citation was to have been given by President Truman today to . . .

In an editorial on this incident, the New York Herald Tribune said: "It is about time that Washington, our national city, lifted itself above the regional . . . The humiliation of these New York schoolboys was a national disgrace."

Exceptions to the Rule

It is not likely that Benjamin Banneker, whose skin was black, would be treated any better than the New York schoolboys. A very light-skinned man was recently turned away at the hotel where he regularly stayed in Washington when his picture was featured in a national magazine as that of a leading American Negro.

Our visitor's best chance would be to wrap a turban around his head and register under some foreign name. This maneuver was successfully employed not long ago at one of the capital's most fashionable hotels by an enterprising American Negro who wanted to test the advantages of being a foreigner.

In recent years, as a kind of experiment, several of Washington's leading hotels have begun to rent dining-rooms and ballrooms for banquets which are bi-racial in character. Negroes attend these functions in considerable numbers without objection.

But the color bar remains in full force and effect. Exceptions are sometimes made to Negroes in large groups, to Negroes en masse, even to Negroes as Negroes. But to the Negro as an individual human being? No. He is rejected by the innkeepers in the capital of a country that prides itself on individual rights.

Barred From Downtown Shows

Even if Benjamin Banneker should get something to eat and a place to stay in Washington, there is no downtown movie he could see. Unless

he posed as an alien, he would be told to go to a Jim Crow theater in a segregated section of town.*

It would do him no good to recall his past services to the city. During the war, a Negro Air Corps sergeant in the uniform of his country was turned away by the manager of a downtown theater when he asked special permission to see a picture on military aviation which was not to be shown elsewhere in the city.¹

If Banneker should ask the reason for this rule, he would probably get the kind of answer recently given a prominent Negro visitor from New York who was stopped at the door of a Washington newsreel theater.

The manager stated: "We don't cater to colored." But I don't want you to cater to colored," I said, "I just want to see the newsreel." He then repeated that they didn't cater to colored. I asked, "Is there any law in this city saying I can't go in?" "No," he said, "it is just the policy of this theater." (Case 156)

In the Capital City

The exclusion policy of Washington theaters and auditoriums has brought the capital and the country much notoriety. The refusal of the Daughters of the American Revolution to permit the use of Constitution Hall for a concert by Marian Anderson, the Negro singer, made headlines at home and abroad.

When colored war veterans were barred from seeing the play "Joan of Lorraine" at Lisner Auditorium in the fall of 1946, the starring actress, Ingrid Bergman, issued a statement that echoed in Stockholm and Singapore:

If I had known of discrimination before I signed I wouldn't have come. I heard in the midst of rehearsal a few days ago that no Negro can come into the theater. And in the capital city, too. Before I came to America, I didn't know there was any place where colored people could not come in.

In some cases the color bar is twisted. While Negroes may not appear as commercial artists on the stage of Constitution Hall, they may sit with white people in the audience. However, the commercial theater, which permits Negroes on the stage, will not allow them in the audience.

Banneker Would Be Confused

Many things would puzzle our 18th century visitor. But one thing in particular would bewilder him. It is a recent development.

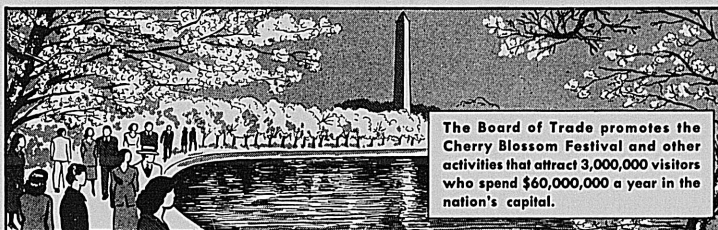
At Lisner Auditorium, which is part of George Washington University, the Board of Trustees tried to answer the criticism of its exclusion policy by banning further commercial stage productions, thereby making the auditorium unavailable to white patrons of the theater as well as colored.

The climax came at National Theater, the capital's only commercial

* A movie house which follows a policy of non-exclusion and non-segregation was recently opened at Dupont Circle.

¹ Pittsburgh Courier, Feb. 16, 1946.

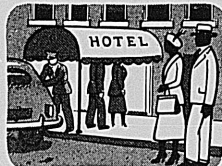
"IT'S YOUR CAPITAL" —Says the Board of Trade



The Board of Trade promotes the Cherry Blossom Festival and other activities that attract 3,000,000 visitors who spend \$60,000,000 a year in the nation's capital.

BUT FOR NEGRO AMERICANS WASHINGTON HAS A MEANING OF ITS OWN

HOTELS "NO COLORED"



Hotels in the downtown area will not rent rooms to Negroes. This has embarrassed dark-skinned foreign visitors.

RESTAURANTS "NO COLORED"



In downtown area restaurants will not serve Negroes. At lunch counters Negroes must stand to be served.

THEATERS "NO COLORED"



Negroes will not be admitted to downtown theaters. Unless they pose as aliens, they are told to go to segregated theaters.

Most white cab drivers pass up Negro patronage in downtown Washington.



In the "best" department stores clerks turn their backs at the approach of a Negro.

CAPITAL GETS WORLD-WIDE PUBLICITY ON SEGREGATION



The Daughters of the American Revolution refused to permit Marian Anderson, Negro, to sing in Constitution Hall.



The National Theater, Capital's only commercial playhouse, is being converted to a movie theater, because of boycott by Actors' Equity for banning Negroes.



Ingrid Bergman, star of "Joan of Lorraine," at Lisner Auditorium, was shocked at the exclusion of Negroes.

playhouse. After its color bar was publicly denounced by a succession of leading actors appearing on its stage, the country's organized theatrical profession voted to stay away from the theater until discrimination was removed.

A Strange Impasse

On August 1, 1948, the deadline set by Actors' Equity Association, the long tradition of a commercial stage in Washington came to an end. The corporation owning National Theater announced it was converting the capital's last playhouse to a movie theater, and keeping the color bar. The reason given was community policy.

National Theater will change its policy only if the general policy is changed in Washington by legislation, or if business and civic groups will remove racial restrictions.¹

Things have come to a strange impasse in the middle of the 20th century. Because of the racial restrictions imposed by business and civic groups, Americans of all colors are now denied the right to see actors perform on the legitimate stage in the capital of the country.

Late in the Day

Even in one of the largest department stores, for the first time in my life, I saw the sign "Colored" on the door of the toilet . . .

Danish Visitor

The hour would be late for Benjamin Banneker. But if he came to the capital around Christmas time, the department stores might still be open for late shoppers. He might want to pick up some small souvenir of his visit to take back to the 18th century.

But he should not push himself forward. In libraries all over the civilized world there is a classic work on racism in America by the Swedish scholar, Gunnar Myrdal, which cites the finding of a well-known American sociologist:

In . . . Washington, D. C. . . there is more rigid segregation and rejection of Negro patronage in the large department stores than anywhere in the South.¹

If Banneker should wonder why the clerks in the "best" stores turned their backs at his approach, he might be interested in the explanation of one of the managers: "There is a fear that catering to Negroes might hurt business. The store wants to trade to a better class than Negroes."

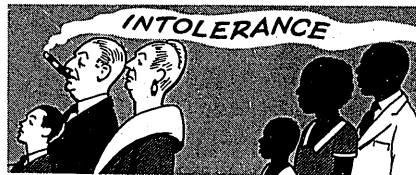
It would be a day full of surprises for the old Negro who helped lay out the capital. If he had no better luck, he might seek out a deserted bench in one of the city's parks, and read again under the stars the last part of the letter he received so long ago:

*"I am, with great esteem, sir,
Your most obedient servant,*

Tho. Jefferson

¹ Washington Times-Herald, Aug. 13, 1947.

² Myrdal, Gunnar, *An American Dilemma*, 1944, p. 631, (quoting Charles S. Johnson).



The Growth of Prejudice

In Washington the Negro . . . has greater advantages than elsewhere in the Union . . . the law requires that he shall be permitted if he can afford to do so, to eat in the best restaurants, sleep in the best hotels, and be admitted to the best theaters patronized by whites.

New York Times, Sept. 25, 1904

A Law Disappears

Some people say that the time is not ripe for colored people to have equal rights as citizens in the Nation's Capital, and that white people are "not ready" to give them such rights.

But in 1872, during the brief period when all the people in the capital could vote, the popularly elected Assembly of the District passed a law giving Negroes equal rights in restaurants, hotels, barber shops, and other places of public accommodation. Stiff penalties were provided for violation.¹

As late as 1904 this civil rights law was familiar to the correspondent of the New York Times. But around the turn of the century it mysteriously disappeared from the compiled statutes of the District, and it cannot be found in present codes. Since there is no record of its repeal, some lawyers speculate that it may still be technically in full force and effect.

In the Time of Joseph Jefferson

Negroes still living in Washington can remember attending downtown theaters. While they usually were seated in the same rows or sections, light-skinned Negroes were often freely scattered through the audience. There was no absolute color bar such as exists today.

The records show that over a hundred years ago, while slavery still flourished in the District, the elder Joseph Jefferson, one of the leading actors of the early American stage, petitioned the city to change the 9 p.m. curfew law as it affected "a great proportion of our audience of this (Negro) caste".

¹ Compiled Statutes District of Columbia, Approved, June 20, 1872. (The Civil Rights Statutes appeared in the compiled statutes of the District as late as the issue of 1887-89.)

In the Time of Grover Cleveland

During the administration of Grover Cleveland, well-to-do colored people were served at some of the best restaurants run by whites. Occasionally Negroes were in the role of hosts. One of Washington's most exclusive hotels was the Wormley House, which catered to family patronage and the congressional and diplomatic set. It was owned and managed by a colored man, James Wormley.

But now the exclusion of Negroes from places of public accommodation has become so rigid that many honest restaurant men believe they would go bankrupt if they were to serve colored people. The manager of a well-known downtown restaurant on Pennsylvania Avenue declared in an interview:

There is no law to prevent their coming in to be served. But, if a half dozen whites walked out when one Negro walked in, I would not run the risk of serving Negroes and going bankrupt. I am quite certain that only the government in this city, or a great philanthropist could operate a restaurant, serve Negroes, and remain open. . . . When the rest of the restaurant proprietors admit Negroes, I will do likewise.¹

The necessity for adopting a common policy toward colored people is insisted upon by all the downtown restaurant proprietors. As one of them put it: "I think if Negroes are to be served in public restaurants, all the restaurants must do so at the same time."²

In the Capital Today

In the capital today, the least tolerant white people are the ones who determine whether a colored person can eat in a restaurant, see a show, get a room in a hotel, or in general enjoy the rights of an American citizen.

These are the people an individual business man considers in deciding whether to serve Negroes. He is afraid that if he loses his most prejudiced customers to his competitor down the street, he will also lose his profit margin and his shirt.

For this reason, the color bar tends to solidify. Once erected in public places, it gives racial prejudice a monetary value, and allows it to be capitalized in a way that makes captive a whole city to the special interests and worst impulses of a few.

A Dog Cemetery

It has reached the place in the capital where a dog cemetery has erected a color bar against the burial of dogs belonging to colored people. In announcing this policy, the owner stated that he assumed the dogs would not object, but he was afraid his white customers would.³

^{1, 2} Brown, Bernard B., Civil Rights in the District of Columbia, p. 95.

³ Document 68.

There is only one way by which the good sense and general interest of the community can prevail, and that is by legislation removing the color bar from the market place and making trade in racial prejudice as illegal as trade in opium and other habit-forming drugs.

The Will of Congress

For many years Congress has been on record as favoring a civil rights law. It passed such a law in 1875 for the whole United States. This law was declared unconstitutional by a divided Supreme Court in 1883 on the ground that it went beyond the Federal jurisdiction and invaded states' rights.

No one, however, questions the right of Congress to reenact such a law specially for the District of Columbia. Its necessity is more evident now than it was seventy-three years ago. The reasons Congress gave in passing the law have been validated by recent history.

Whereas, It Is Essential

THE CIVIL RIGHTS LAW OF 1875

Whereas, it is essential to just government . . . to mete out equal justice to all, of whatever nativity, race, color, or persuasion, religious or political; and it being the appropriate object of legislation to enact great fundamental principles into law:

Therefore,

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress Assembled, that all persons within the United States be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of the accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges of inns, public conveyances on land or water, theaters, and other places of public amusement; subject only to the conditions and limitations established by law, and applicable alike to citizens of every race and color, regardless of any previous condition of servitude.**

What the Color Bar Means

Color is a superficial basis upon which to judge a man. Yet in Washington it is the first basis by which is determined the most important decisions of a man's life—where he shall live, where he shall work and at what pay, where he shall go to school and church, and how he shall be judged in his community.

Once a man passes the color test, he has the freedom of the capital. But if he fails . . .

* The law carried criminal penalties, and provided for a forfeit of \$500 to any aggrieved person.

Chapter 5



Ghettoes in the Capital

One Czech acquaintance told me that most Negroes in Washington live in special sections of the city—"Nazi Ghettoes", he called them.

Danish Visitor

What Is the Explanation?

Ghetto is an ugly word. To a Dane it is ugly. To any Nazi victim. To anyone who saw how Hitler placed a yellow mark on Jews so they could be made to live apart, suffer apart, die apart. To an American it is ugly.

But in the capital of the Nation live a quarter of a million people, one-fourth of the city, who need no mark sewed on their clothing. Some are more white than Negro. But let there be any color in the skin identifiable as Negro, half Negro, or one-eighth Negro, and the possessor of that skin has lost his American right to live anywhere in town.*

How do Americans explain it to themselves?

Let us examine the myths. In high places there are responsible men who suggest that Washington is a "southern city", and that therefore racial ghettoes are "natural" in the capital. Is this true?

Is Washington a "Southern City?"

Geographically, Washington is a short distance below the Mason and Dixon Line. But it was the capital of the North during the Civil War. Its present population is 31 per cent native to the District, 31 per cent from the South, 31 per cent from the North, and 7 per cent foreign born.¹ On balance and by reputation, it is the Capital of all the United States.

Even if Washington were a southern city, its racial ghettoes could not be blamed on the South. "Southern whites do not want Negroes to be completely isolated from them; they derive many advantages from their proximity."² In the proudest old southern cities, Negroes are housed everywhere.

* Even a person who appears white but is known socially as a Negro cannot buy or live outside the ghetto.

¹ Source: 16th Census, Population—State of Birth of Native Population, Table 35.

² Myrdal, Gunnar, *An American Dilemma*, 1944, p. 621.

In Charleston, S. C., which is almost 50 per cent Negro, 32.7 per cent of the colored people live in blocks where the majority of the people are white.¹

Are Ghettoes "Natural" in Washington?

Mass segregation is a relatively new phenomenon in the Nation's Capital. Early records indicate that its first free Negroes lived in huts and shacks "stuck here and there among the shadows of the finer and more pretentious homes of the white population."² They were not confined to certain districts.

In the days of slavery, most free Negroes were poor. But at the time of the Emancipation Act, they outnumbered slaves in the District of Columbia by 3 to 1. They were paying taxes on \$650,000 worth of real estate, and constituted one-fifth of all the owners of land in the District, a proportion higher than it is today.³

Colored people owned valuable property before the Civil War in such sections as Fifteenth and New York Avenue, now part of the downtown area where no Negro can see a show or sit down to eat. "Many had homes on Sixteenth Street; and a colored feed dealer, Alfred Lee, purchased the mansion on H Street which had been the British Embassy."⁴

How a Crisis Was Met

When the slaves were freed, the city was suddenly confronted with its greatest social crisis. Thirty thousand men, women, and children, homeless, penniless, and illiterate, flocked to the city, increasing its free Negro population four times, to 33 per cent of the total population.

Many of these bewildered people settled in the neighborhood of the Federal forts which ringed the city, seeking the protection of the soldiers. Others wandered into town and were housed in alley shacks, hastily erected by real estate promoters. But there was no mass segregation.

Instead of a definitely bounded territory into which almost the entire Negro population was crowded, there were scattered communities which distributed the Negro population throughout practically the entire city.⁵

At Fifteenth and H Streets, which is now a restricted white area, stood the fashionable hotel belonging to the Negro, James Wormley. Housing conditions were squalid for the majority with low incomes, but Negroes of the middle and upper classes were free to live in almost any part of town.

Why have barricades been erected in the 20th century?

We come to a subsidiary myth, but one which distorts the thinking of many white people in the capital today. It is the myth of a recent Negro invasion.

¹ Weaver, Robert C., *The Negro Ghetto*, 1948, p. 8.

² ⁵ Jones, William H., *The Housing of Negroes in Washington, D. C.*, 1929, p. 27.

³ ⁴ Washington: City and Capital, American Guide Series, 1937, p. 74.

Myth of a Negro Invasion

The Old Minutemen said, "They shall not pass." Let our slogan be, "They shall not squat here."

President of Congress Heights Citizens Association
Washington Post, Nov. 9, 1947

Under the banner of self-defense, the white community of Washington has been mobilized against the Negro. But the proportion of Negroes in the District of Columbia has declined from 33.6 per cent in 1880 to 30 per cent in 1947. If the suburbs are considered, the decline has been even greater.

While the city has been spreading into Virginia and Maryland, the colored population has been largely confined to the District. In the entire metropolitan area, the proportion of Negroes is no more than 24 per cent, and slightly less than it was in 1930.¹

Since 1930, the population of greater Washington has almost doubled, increasing from roughly 620,000 to 1,200,000 in 1947. But for each new colored resident, three whites have come to town. What has caused the invasion myth?

Whites Spread Out, Negroes Pile Up

Like most American cities, Washington has grown by spreading outward in ever-widening circles from its business center (13th and F Streets, N.W.) as well as by crowding more and more into the older, inner zones. But while the whites have been spreading out, the Negroes have been piling up.

The following breakdown based on census tracts shows what happened between 1930 and 1940. Over half the Negro increase occurred inside a radius of 2¼ miles of the business district. But almost all the white increase occurred in the outer zones of the District, and in the suburbs beyond the District line.

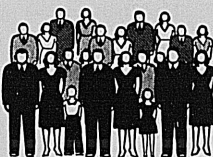
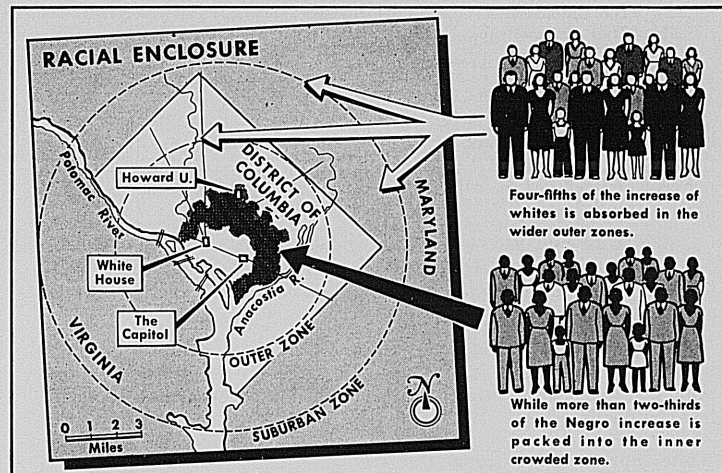
	Negro Increase	White Increase	Ratio
Inner Zones	38,136	21,873	2 Negroes to 1 white
Outer Zones	17,062	99,141	1 Negro to 6 whites
Suburbs	5,836	104,699	1 Negro to 18 whites
Metropolitan Total....	61,034	225,713	1 Negro to 3.7 whites

Reason for Alarm

As a result of this uneven distribution, the Negro increase was almost double that of whites in the inner zones of highest density. But in all other zones, the whites had the great advantage. In the open spaces of the suburbs, their advantage was 18 to 1.

¹ Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports, Population Characteristics*, July 23, 1947.

WHAT CAUSES THE TENSION?



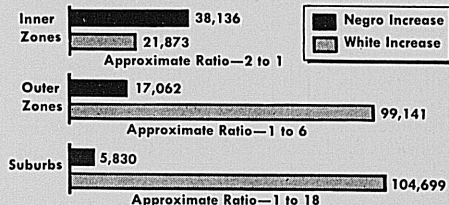
Four-fifths of the increase of whites is absorbed in the wider outer zones.



While more than two-thirds of the Negro increase is packed into the inner crowded zone.

WHITES SPREAD OUT, NEGROES PILE UP

1930 - 1940



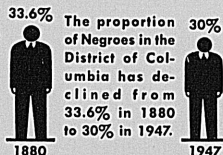
These population figures show that while the white population has been spreading out into Virginia and Maryland, the Negroes have been confined to the inner zones of the district.

SLUM INHABITANTS

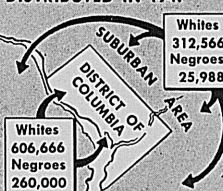


Less than one-third of the capital's inhabitants are Negro, but two-thirds of its slum inhabitants are Negro.

MYTH OF NEGRO INVASION



HOW POPULATION WAS DISTRIBUTED IN 1947



The white population in suburban Washington outnumbers Negroes 12 to 1. In the District of Columbia whites outnumber Negroes by only 2 2/3 to 1

These figures explain the myth of a Negro invasion. The tension is caused by compression, not expansion. The Minutemen of Congress Heights have good reason for alarm, but the pressure they feel is the weight of their own hand against the Negro, the hand of the organized white community of the capital.

Segregation increases and accentuates racial tensions. It is worth noting that race riots in this country have seldom occurred in the neighborhoods with a racially mixed population. Our worst riots have occurred along the borders of tightly segregated areas.

1946 Biennial Report, the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America

The Black Belts

If you place the point of a compass at the business center of the capital, a few blocks from Ford's Theater, and describe an arc on the map with a radius of 2 1/4 miles, you bound the lives and hopes of two-thirds of the colored people of Washington.

Inside this arc are the black belts, taking roughly the form of a crescent from the Navy Yard in the southeast to McMillan Reservoir in the north, and around to Rock Creek and the Potomac on the west.

Inside this black crescent is a white hollow. Here we have the downtown business area, the fashionable hotel and diplomatic district, George Washington University, the D.A.R.'s Constitution Hall, and, in the very middle, the White House.

Besieging the White House

Contained on the outside by mobilized white neighborhoods, the black crescent is pressing inward. From the bulging area of greatest concentration in the central northwest, a Negro salient has crossed the Massachusetts Avenue boundary, and come straight down Vermont Avenue toward the front door of the White House.

Looked at in one way, the colored people are being contained. Looked at in another way, they are besieging the White House, the Capitol, and the Lincoln Memorial. Closer than all the white people in the United States live these two hundred thousand men, women, and children to the marble and stone of the American dream.

And what is their heritage?

A Brief Description

The Capital's massed slums are among the ugliest in the nation. Some idea of their character may be gained from a few sentences of a detailed report which appeared in the Washington Post on February 6, 1944.

NEGRO HOUSING — CAPITAL SETS RECORD FOR U. S. IN UNALLEVIATED WRETCHEDNESS OF SLUMS

By Agnes E. Meyer

In my journey through the war centers I have visited the worst possible housing. But not in the Negro slums of Detroit, not even in the southern cities, have I seen human beings subjected to such unalleviated wretchedness as in the alleys of our own city of Washington . . .

Not only houses have been subdivided, but small rooms already too filthy for animal habitation,

have been partitioned with cardboard to absorb more tenants.

In Burke's Court, 14 occupants have been stowed away in a single room; in Ninth St., N.W., a small house holds 19 persons, while a woman and three children live in the basement.

Five or six persons to a room, occupying at times a single bed, is a commonplace.

What Segregation Means

The odds against Negroes in Washington can be expressed in cold figures. As a result of their segregation in slum areas, the housing available to them is necessarily inferior to that of people who are free to live anywhere in the city.

A sample census survey made in 1947 indicates that a Negro family is two and a half times as likely as a white family to live in a dwelling containing six or more persons. A Negro family is also:

- 9 times as likely to live in a house needing structural repair
- 4 times as likely to lack a private flush toilet
- 10 times as likely to lack central heating
- 11 times as likely to lack running water
- 8 times as likely to lack electric lights¹

Only 30 per cent of the residents of the District of Columbia are Negroes. But Negroes have 70 per cent of the slum residents, 69 per cent of the tuberculosis deaths, and 69 per cent of the felony arrests. One-third of the Negro felonies are by juveniles under 18 years of age.

The Worst Crime

If you are proud of your capital, look at Chart 1 which shows the location of the black belts. Then look at Chart 2, which shows the concentration of dwelling units with more than 1.5 persons per room. Then look at Chart 3, which shows where children live who get arrested.

In disease and crime the ghettos can be described, and graphs drawn which ring the Capitol and White House with larceny and tuberculosis. But the worst disease cannot be drawn on a map, and the worst crime is not committed by Negro children.

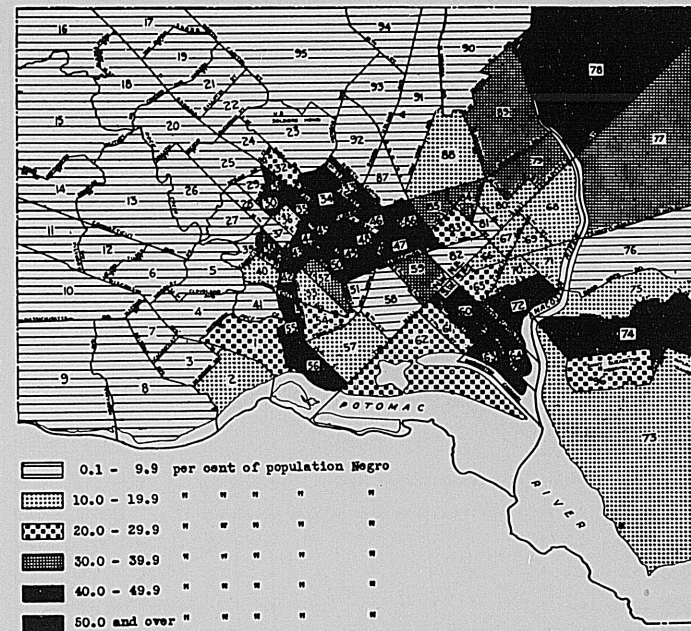
We are looking at a racial enclosure. By color, people are forced to live here. By color, they are barred from the freedom of the capital.

Who is responsible?

¹Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Housing, July 14, 1947.

Chart 1

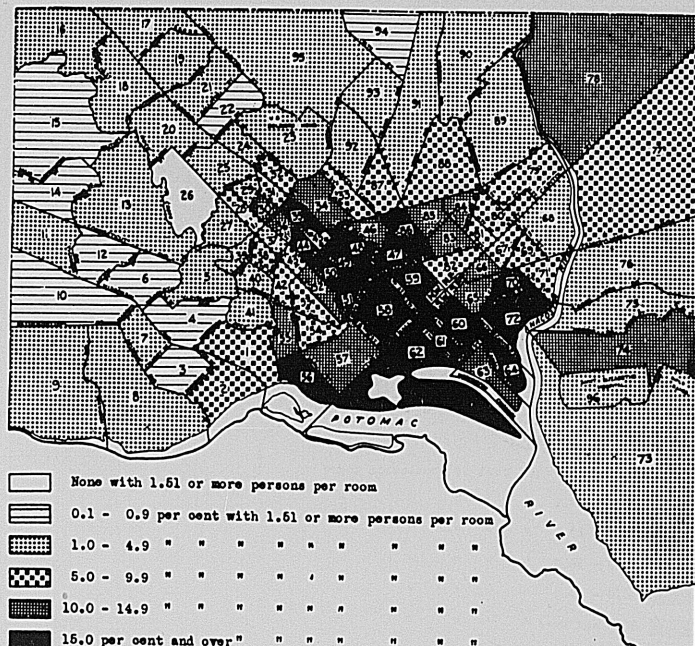
Per Cent of Population Negro, 1940



Washington Council of Social Agencies
Department of Research

Chart 2

Per Cent of Dwelling Units with 1.51 or More Persons Per Room, 1940

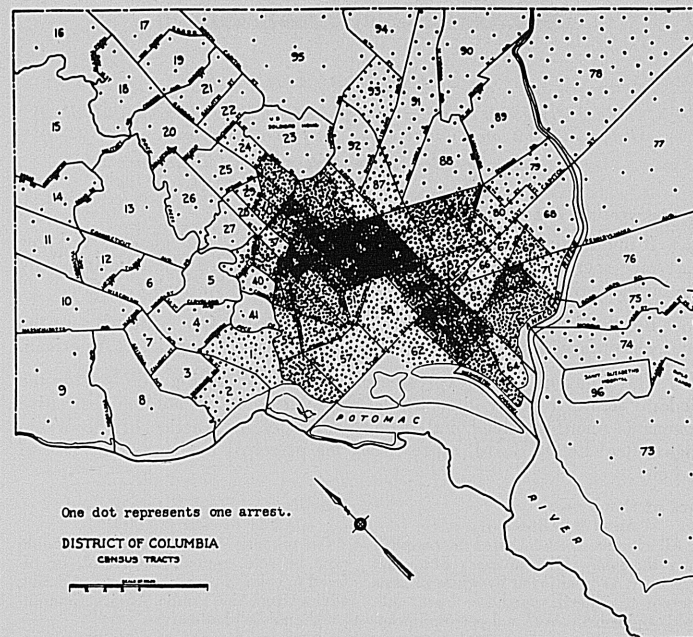


Washington Council of Social Agencies
Department of Research

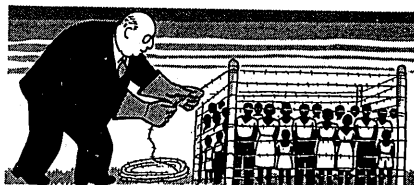
Chart 3

Total Arrests Made By Metropolitan Police During 1937 of Persons
Under 17 Years of Age

(Exclusive of Traffic Violations)
(Census Tract of Residence of Persons Arrested)



Washington Council of Social Agencies
Department of Research



Segregation, Inc.

Race segregation here is a "natural state", and certain groups which agitate against it are "unscrupulous" and "un-American".

*President of Federation of Citizens Association
Washington Post, Oct. 15, 1947*

Is Segregation American?

It might surprise the people we liberated from Nazi ghettos to know that race segregation is defended as both "natural" and "American" by the business and property interests that dominate the Nation's Capital.

But the fact is that the leaders who call segregation "natural" are the ones who enforce it. There is no reason to suppose the practice is American.

The situation can be expressed most briefly by setting side by side the Federal statute recently cited by the Supreme Court in holding restrictive covenants unenforceable,¹ and the present rules of practice of the Washington Real Estate Board, representing the principal business enterprise of the city.

Act of Congress, April 9, 1866²

All citizens of the United States shall have the same right, in every State and Territory, as is enjoyed by white citizens thereof to inherit, purchase, lease, sell, hold, and convey, real and personal property.

Washington Real Estate Board Code of Ethics, 1948³

No property in a white section should ever be sold, rented, advertised, or offered to colored people. In case of doubt, advice from the Public Affairs Committee should be obtained.*

The Real Estate Board

Among the active members of the real estate board, and subscribing to its "code of ethics", are twenty-five banks, insurance and title companies, and building and loan associations. Because of the absence of heavy indus-

¹ Hurd, et al., v. Modge, et al., (1948), 68 Supreme Court Reporter 847.

² 14 Stat. 27, 8 U. S. C. No. 42.

³ Code of Ethics, Section 5, Article 15.

* As a general rule, the Board takes the position that any neighborhood is white if 50 per cent or more of its inhabitants are white. (Document No. 109)

try, these groups hold a position of unchallenged leadership in the economic life of the community.

The District's only industry of consequence is the Federal Government, and its great expansion, financed by all the taxpayers of the nation, has supported one of the most profitable real estate markets in the country. Since 1900, the Nation's Capital has doubled and then doubled again in population.

Yet the real estate interests have used their privileged position to bar Negroes from most of the growing city, and to confine them tighter and tighter in racial ghettos. Under their code of ethics, they have acted jointly to deprive colored citizens of their equal right to purchase, lease, sell, and hold property.

On what ethical ground have they done this? On the ground that equal rights for colored people would depreciate property values in "white neighborhoods".

Is this good ethics? What is meant by "depreciating property values?"

Negroes As Home-Owners

Real estate men themselves report that Negroes make good homeowners, and that, given a chance, they take care of their property. A few years ago, the National Association of Real Estate Boards published the results of a survey it conducted among the local boards. Here are the answers to some of the questions:¹

1. Does the Negro make a good home buyer and carry through his purchase to completion?

"Yes," was the almost unanimous reply . . . "Very good." "Better than whites of the same economic status," some cities report. "Their tenacity and willingness to sacrifice to hold on to their homes far exceed whites."

4. Does the Negro abuse property, or does he take as good care of it as other tenants of comparable status?

He takes good care of it, in many cases better care than other tenants of his economic group, say 11 cities (73 per cent of those reporting) . . .

5. Do you think there is a good opportunity for Realtors in the Negro housing field in your city?

"Yes," say almost 2/3rds of the cities (63 per cent). "Splendid opportunity," say Boards in some of the largest cities . . .

Segregation Is Good Business

The local real estate board has nothing against Negroes as homeowners.* But "exclusiveness" has a market value, and is a substantial factor in determining what many white people will offer for residential property. Thus segregation is good business.

¹ "Realtor Work for Negro Housing", National Association of Real Estate Boards, Oct. 24, 1944.

* In the capital, restrictive covenants have been directed more and more against persons of Jewish descent.

By throwing up racial barriers, a realtor can capitalize on the racial feelings of some of his customers without making the property less valuable to others. Once this process starts, racial prejudice becomes an investment, and enters into the resale price of all lots in the area.

In this way Negroes have been barred from most of the new subdivisions, and they are now being boosted out of many old neighborhoods where they lived undisturbed for generations. A striking example is Georgetown, throughout which colored people formerly lived intermingled with whites.

How Money Was Made In Georgetown

Since the 1920's, this old part of Washington has been promoted as a quaint, historic, desirable place for white people to live. The dispossession of the Negro residents is part of the redevelopment project, and is jointly managed by the city's leading realtors and their allied banks and trust companies.

A few Negro home-owners have succumbed to inflated prices, and have sold willingly. Others have been compelled to sell after being refused loans for repairs and improvements. As a matter of policy, the lending institutions of Washington deny credit to colored people in regions being prepared for whites.

Many Negro tenants have been evicted so that white owners could remodel and rent or sell to whites at substantially increased prices. And as the white developers have moved into Georgetown, they have covenanted it block by block with racial restrictions to keep any Negro from returning.

Uprooted From Civil War Settlements

In the same way, the old Negro settlements around the Civil War fort sites have been gradually whittled down. The white population, once indifferent to these hilly regions because they were too far out of town, has come to consider them highly desirable residential sections. Few colored families have been able to resist the methodical real estate purchasing agent, or fight the condemnation or cutting up of their property by new roads and subdivisions.

Twenty years ago the "West End" was a good-sized Negro community. But new public buildings and recent additions to George Washington University (forbidden to Negroes) have given real estate interests a chance to develop much of this area west of the White House into an "exclusive" district of luxury apartment houses for whites.

Large areas formerly occupied by Negroes have been condemned for government buildings, parks, schools, and highway systems. In recent years many Negro families have been dislodged by the new Federal buildings on Constitution Avenue, by war housing projects for whites in the Garfield

section of the southeast, by the expansion of the Navy Yard, and the super-highway network built to service the Pentagon Building and the National Airport.

America's Displaced Persons

Colored people are displaced by public improvements more often than whites because they are concentrated in the blighted downtown areas that are suitable for public construction. And once unhoused, they are worse off than whites because they cannot move freely in the District.

Under the code of ethics of the Real Estate Board, they are crammed tighter and tighter into the already bursting Negro ghettos. During the war, a Washington newspaper reported:

The crowding in the slums of the District has also been intensified by the fact that not only housing but the areas formerly occupied by Negroes have decreased. Various developments such as public buildings, war housing projects for whites and new roads have swept away many acres of ground heretofore open to Negro occupancy¹ . . .

Negroes Pay For Exclusion

Deprived of his equal right as a citizen to participate in the growth of the capital, uprooted from many old scattered communities because exclusiveness can be sold, the Negro is herded into the inner zones of the city. And here for the second time his segregation is capitalized, and he is made to pay for his own exclusion.

Negroes in the same economic groups are better pay because the demand for housing is so much keener.

Realtor Work For Negro Housing (1944)
National Association of Real Estate Boards

Because the areas in which Negroes can live are artificially limited, they must pay more for the same housing than white people. Uncontradicted evidence in a recent Supreme Court case showed that property in the 100 Block of Bryant St., N. W., an area of mixed occupancy, is priced 30 per cent higher to Negroes.²

Going and Coming

As a result, the same real estate interests that make money by excluding colored people from new subdivisions are able to collect inflated rentals from the slums into which they are driven. A profit is made on the Negro going and coming.

The Negro home-owner is forced to assume exorbitant financing costs. Staggering under the burden of his payments, with an income lower than a

¹ Washington Post, Feb. 6, 1944.

² Hurd, et al., v. Hodge, et al., (1948), 68 Supreme Court Reporter 847.

white man's, he is usually forced to take in roomers and subdivide his property in order to save it.

What all this means to Negro families and also the community was recently summarized in an opinion rendered by Justice Edgerton of the Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia:

That enforced housing segregation, in such circumstances, increases crowding, squalor and prices in the areas where Negroes are compelled to live is obvious. It results in "doubling up", scandalous housing conditions for Negroes, destroyed home life, mounting juvenile delinquency, and other indications of social pathology which are bound to have their contagious influence upon adjoining white areas.¹

The Citizens Associations

The Negro gets blamed by white people for his own segregation. Compressed, he is held responsible for the pressure. His concentration, which is the white man's profit, is regarded as a mobilization. His painful necessity of paying more becomes a fifth column threat to the racial integrity of adjacent white areas. The Minutemen who defend these ramparts are gathered into the Citizens Associations.

It's too bad you can't take a nice healthy club or crow-bar and lay them (Negroes) in the gutter where they belong.

Speech before Dahlgreen Terrace Citizens Association
Reported in Washington Post, Sept. 18, 1947

Originally the Citizens' Associations were neighborhood improvement societies, interested in such things as trees and flowers, schools and parks, and improved city services. Not until the 1920's did they become actively concerned in the containment of Negroes, and turn into a front for the real estate interests.

Theirs Is Not To Reason Why

These neighborhood groups did not manage the higher strategy by which the Negro was barred from most of the District and piled up in the inner zones. But they were the first to feel the pressure, and they responded in a kind of reflex action. Instead of demanding of civic leaders that colored residents be allowed to thin out in other areas, they built fences of their own and made the pressure worse.

In the drive to exclude the Negro, the federated Citizens' Associations have functioned as the front-line shock troops, completing his encirclement by a network of mutual defense pacts, or agreements not to sell, erected all around the inner zones of the city. Their job has been to hold the line and sound the alarm whenever "danger" threatens.

¹ Dissenting opinion, Hurd, et al., v. Hodge, et al., (1947), 16 Fed. (2nd), 233, 235.

Recently the alarm sounded in Congress Heights in southeast Washington. It was reported that two houses in this area had been sold to colored families, and five hundred white property owners braved inclement weather to attend a hurriedly called mass meeting. Upon assembling, they were told that a collection had already been taken up and that both houses had been bought back from their Negro owners at premium prices. But a leader warned of a continuing threat:

We called you here to plead with you not to sell to a colored person . . . Colored persons might offer \$1,000 or \$2,000 more, and that's a temptation.

Speech before Congress Heights Citizens' Association
Reported in Washington Evening Star, Sept. 18, 1947

White Victims of Segregation

The white people who belong to these Citizens' Associations are themselves victims of the over-all segregation policy. The profit is not for them. The fact that the Negro's exclusion can be capitalized is their main worry. What they fear is the high price that colored people are forced to pay, and are willing to offer. They don't want to sell.

What is important to most whites is the value of property as a place to live, and this value is threatened by the construction of racial barricades. With each Negro segregated, the fear increases in adjacent white communities as if a dam were about to break. When a crack appears, panic may ensue and the white owner may suffer an actual monetary loss.

But worse than any derangement in property values is what happens to the relations of men. When bigotry is incorporated, normal human values are destroyed and every Negro becomes a menace.

THE WHITES SEEMED TO GET SCARED . . .

We lived for sixteen years in this neighborhood. For ten of those years we were the only colored family in this block, and we were completely accepted. Then, some time ago, the whites seemed to get scared about an invasion by Negroes, and they started to get up a restrictive agreement. After they had all signed up, they came around to ask us to sign, the agreement, too.

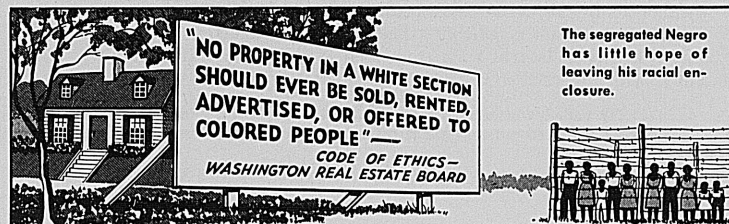
We were surprised that they would come around to us with a thing like that, but they just said: "You're different. You know we all like you, and it isn't people like you that we want to keep out." Then my father said: "Do you know what you are asking me to sign? You are asking me to promise not to sell my house to my own brother, and if I sign this thing I can't even deed it to my own son."

Statement of Negro Government Employee (Case G-121)

In No-Man's Land

As the color lines draw tighter, a kind of no-man's land is growing between the races in the capital. It is becoming more and more rare for

WHAT HOUSING SEGREGATION MEANS TO THE CAPITAL'S NEGROES



WHAT HOUSING SEGREGATION DOES TO THE NEGROES



INCREASES
CROWDING



PROMOTES
SQUALOR



DESTROYS
HOME LIFE



INCREASES
JUVENILE
DELINQUENCY

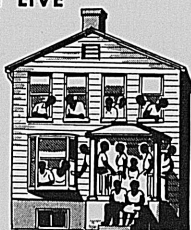
NEGROES PAY MORE ANYWHERE THEY LIVE



Property in areas of mixed occupancy is priced 30% higher to Negroes.



Such prices mean higher financing or second mortgage.



Negroes have little left for maintenance and often take in roomers or divide their homes into apartments.

BUT NEGROES DO MAKE GOOD HOME OWNERS



"In many cases the Negro takes better care of his property than other tenants of his economic group"

— National Association of Real Estate Boards

white and colored people to live together in the same neighborhoods, or even to have a speaking acquaintance with each other.

However, fringe areas develop where the races are jammed together in slums, and where it is not practicable to capitalize any kind of "exclusiveness". A detailed field study of one of these mixed neighborhoods was undertaken recently to discover how the races got along under such adverse circumstances.

The neighborhood selected was a three block stretch on the southern edge of the main Negro ghetto a few blocks from the downtown business district. Its buildings are old brick structures in varying stages of dilapidation. The tiny yards are mostly uncared for, and are marked off by fences in need of repair. Elaborately wrought ironwork decorations are epitaphs of a better day.

No Trouble Reported

In these three blocks live approximately 600 adults, 60 per cent of them white and 40 per cent Negro. The Negroes are more crowded than the whites. Whole families live in one room, cooking on hot-plates or small stoves. Stairways, walls, floors, and plumbing are in bad shape. Ordinary locks have become useless and have been replaced by padlocks.

The great majority of white people in the area are natives of the South. Two-thirds of those interviewed had lived in the neighborhood for more than one year, and one-third had lived there for more than five years. Negroes first moved into the area about ten years ago.

At the end of each interview, the following question was asked, phrased to point up factual personal experience, as distinguished from attitude, opinion, and hearsay:

QUESTION: Have you or any members of your family ever had any difficulty or trouble with the colored (white) people on this street?

RESULT: Of the 209 adults covered (126 white, 83 Negro), trouble was reported for only one person. He was a white man who said of Negroes: "They make too much noise at night."

People Get Along

Opinions and attitudes were not asked for, but one elderly woman who was born in the South and had lived in the neighborhood more than ten years said:

The Negroes give no trouble. They're good neighbors. I always liked the ones who bought property beside us six years ago. The man takes an interest in his place. We say "hello" and chat often. They're noisy, at times, but who isn't? Yes, we get along fine. (Case N-46)

Careful observations of this area over a period of years support the conclusion that at all ages the people get along with one another, in spite of serious overcrowding, a low educational and income level, and the presence of white southerners in unusual numbers. A matter-of-fact way of life has developed.

The races trade together in the same drug stores, grocery stores, and neighborhood shops. In the middle block, white and colored children frequently play together. Occasionally, one can see such signs of approval as a white mother turning a jumping rope for a couple of girls of both races, or a father joining in a ball game with a mixed group of boys.

It is not in the field of spontaneous human relationships that trouble occurs in Washington, but on a high policy level where the segregation of the Negro is planned as a matter of good business, and investments are made in the denial of his equal right to own property. It is not the poor whites who set the pattern, but men of acknowledged culture and refinement, the leaders of the community.

Allied against the Negro in this doubtful enterprise, in spite of contrary ideals and professions, is the full majesty of the United States Government.

Chapter 7



Negroes Are Americans

It is one thing when private tenants, property owners and financial institutions, maintain and extend patterns of racial segregation in housing. It is quite another matter when a Federal agency chooses to side with the segregationists.

Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma

In a matter involving the rights of citizens in the capital, it is impossible for the United States Government to be neutral. It must adopt a policy in favor of treating Negroes as Americans, or help deprive them of their rights.

The Courts Admit Error

For a generation, the Federal courts of the District of Columbia have helped real estate men enforce agreements not to sell land to colored people. But the Supreme Court has now decided that such action violates the Act of Congress¹ giving all citizens of the United States the same right to purchase, lease, sell, and hold property.

In a historic decision handed down in the spring of 1948, the high court reversed an order of the District Federal Court evicting colored families from homes they had bought and paid for on Bryant St., N. W., in Washington. Chief Justice Vinson delivered the opinion of the court:

OPINION OF SUPREME COURT

Solely because of their race and color they are confronted with orders of court divesting their titles in the properties and ordering that the premises be vacated . . . We hold that the action of the District Court directed against the Negro purchasers and the white sellers denies rights intended by Congress to be protected by the Civil Rights Act, and that, consequently the action cannot stand.

But even in the absence of the statute, there are other considerations which would indicate that enforcement of restrictive covenants in these cases is judicial action contrary to the public policy of the United States² . . .

¹ Sec. 1978, Rev. Stat., 8 U.S.C. 42: "All citizens of the United States shall have the same right, in every State and Territory, as is enjoyed by white citizens thereof to inherit, purchase, lease, sell, hold, and convey real and personal property."

² Hurd, et al., v. Hodge, et al., (1948), 68 Supreme Court Reporter 847.

Damage Has Been Done

Even if all government agencies were now resolved to protect Negroes in their rights as Americans, it would not be easy to undo the admitted wrong that has been done them. The best areas of the District have already been preempted by whites, and the heart of the capital will long be scarred with ghettos built in the name of the law.

But in spite of the Supreme Court reversal, the government's lending, housing, and planning agencies are still being used by the bankers and realtors of Washington to help deny colored people their equal right to own property in the District of Columbia.

Colored families will no longer be thrown out of homes in "white sections" on orders of the Federal Judge. But they are being denied the right of home-ownership just as effectively in other ways with the help of the Federal Government.

FHA Insures Segregation

If a colored man wants to build a house, he must usually, like a white man, borrow money to finance it. Here the government steps in with its FHA mortgage-insurance plan, which is intended to encourage the building of low and medium cost homes. The banker lends the money, and collects the interest, and the government insures him from loss.

Until 1947, however, the FHA Underwriter's Manual required that deeds in bi-racial areas include: "Prohibition of the occupancy of properties except by the race for which they are intended." In other words, the segregation of the Negro in the capital was the only condition under which FHA would approve a loan.

As a result of public criticism, racial conditions have been deleted from the new FHA Manual. But in Washington, the bankers themselves insist on segregation. As long as they are permitted to make this condition in issuing government-insured loans, government money is being used to insure that Negroes are penned in racial enclosures.

No Place To Build

Often this means that a colored man can't build a home at all in Washington. In the areas now allotted to him by the Real Estate Board, there are not many vacant building sites. During the war, agents for the Federal Public Housing Administration surveyed the city in vain search for suitable land.

Every time an area not encumbered by racial restrictions was found and seriously considered, nearby white residents lodged public protests and threatened court action. The American Veterans Committee wanted to build a housing project for veterans of all races in Washington, but was finally compelled to seek land outside the District.

War veterans, both white and colored, know what the housing short-

age means. But the Negro veteran has an additional problem in Washington. He is faced with an artificial land shortage. A census survey taken in 1947 showed that 71 per cent of the married Negro veterans in the city were living doubled-up or in rented rooms or tourist cabins—a figure which was higher than for any city in the South.¹

Private Enterprise a Mockery

The purpose of the government to encourage private building for low and medium income groups has been frustrated where it is needed most. What a mockery private enterprise has become for the colored people of Washington was shown during the war when the government issued priorities to private builders for desperately needed homes.

It was revealed at Senate hearings in 1944 that of 30,700 dwelling units for which priorities had been given to private builders, only about 200, or less than 1 per cent, had been completed for Negroes. Of 2,300 priorities allotted specifically for Negro occupancy in August 1943, only 22 were under construction and 8 completed at the end of the year.²

It is obvious that segregation discourages private building for Negroes and increases their need for public housing. Yet the efforts of the capital's public housing authority to find building sites for Negro occupancy have aroused bitter controversy.

Threats To Public Housing

In 1943, at the height of a critical shortage of housing for Negro war workers, the National Capital Housing Authority proposed the construction of a project for Negroes in the Congress Heights area. It had to be abandoned, however, because of political pressure brought to bear by organized groups which were "fencing in" the area for whites.

The attacks made by these private interests on government plans for Negro housing culminated in a congressional investigation of the housing agency in 1944. During the hearings, the President of the Federation of Citizens Associations warned:

Unless it is going to be thoroughly understood that public housing must be continued on a segregated basis, people of Washington are going to, by a very great majority, oppose it.³

Terms of Surrender

Unable to cope with the power of the real estate lobby, the government housing authority has accepted the mass segregation of Negroes as the only basis on which it will be permitted to build any housing for the low-income residents of the capital. One of its officials explained in 1947: "Segregation is the accepted pattern of the community."

¹ Housing and Home Finance Agency, *The Housing of Negro Veterans*, Jan., 1948. (Survey in 24 southern and 8 northern areas conducted by Bureau of Labor Statistics and Bureau of the Census.)

^{2,3} Sub-committee hearings, Senate Committee on District of Columbia, *Investigation of the National Capital Housing Authority*, 1944, p. 1142.

HOW NEGROES BECOME DISPLACED PERSONS



1 Washington's over-crowded slum areas occupied by Negroes—



2 Are opened to white development. The wreckers arrive and—



3 New housing for whites is erected. The displaced colored people are re-located within shrinking area.



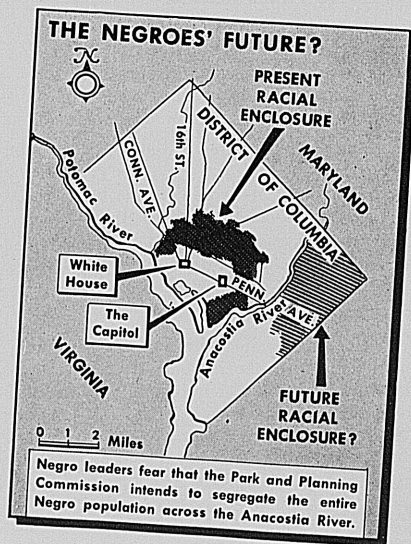
NO PLACE TO GO



The courts no longer enforce restrictive covenants but a silent conspiracy does.



Pressure groups force housing and planning boards to tighten segregation.



But in accepting segregation, the housing agency has helped defeat its own purpose. While it has cleared the central part of the city of many scattered alley slums, and has built an appreciable number of dwelling units for Negroes on very limited funds, the net result has been to further decrease the land area available for Negro housing.*

The slum areas it has cleared have been opened to white development, and the colored residents have been moved back within shrinking borders. Negroes are always relocated in established Negro neighborhoods, but housing projects for whites are sometimes located in areas of mixed occupancy, and even in predominately Negro areas.** In this way even more land is captured for white use.

A Vicious Circle

The government is caught in a vicious circle. Partly because segregation discourages private building, public housing for Negroes is necessary at the taxpayer's expense. But this housing is always built in a way to tighten segregation, thereby creating the need for more public housing, and for more money to be spent in aggravation of the original evil.

The cost of publicly-financed segregation can be measured, not only in lost human values and violated constitutional principles, but in defeated purposes and in dollars and cents. It makes wards of the people segregated.

Things have reached the point in Washington where the government must soon face the question of whether it is going to protect colored people in their rights as citizens, or whether it is going to confirm them in their disinheritance. Great projects are under way.

A More Beautiful Capital

Elaborate plans are being drawn to make Washington the most beautiful capital in the world. Under the Redevelopment Act passed by Congress in 1946, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission has been given authority to plan the rebuilding of all the city's blighted areas. Millions of dollars are to be made available for land purchases.

In glowing words, the chairman of the Commission has stated his purpose to plan a capital adequate to the needs of the people, and worthy of its great destiny. The city will have new parks and playgrounds, a magnificent new highway system, and fine new public buildings. Unsightly slums will no longer mar the view from the Capitol steps.

The chairman's words have received much applause. No one wants to see blighted areas in the center of Washington. No one wants to see substandard housing perpetuated, least of all the Negro who must live in it.

* NCHA now operates 3,259 permanent low-rent dwelling units; 2,700 of them occupied by Negroes, 559 by whites. In 1940, there were in the District of Columbia, approximately 173,500 occupied dwelling units; 40,000 Negro-occupied, 135,500 white-occupied.

** Among the projects for whites built in largely Negro areas are the Lily Ponds House and the Quarles Street Houses, off Kenilworth Ave., in the far Northeast, and the Knox Hill Dwellings and the 25th Street Houses, directly south of St. Elizabeth's Hospital.

THOUSANDS OF WASHINGTON'S NEGROES LIVE IN SLUM DWELLINGS LIKE THESE



IN THE SHADOW OF THE CAPITOL



SLUM DWELLINGS NEAR SENATE OFFICE BUILDING



19% OF HOUSES
NEED MAJOR
REPAIRS
(White houses only 2%)



30% LACK
CENTRAL
HEATING
(White houses only 3%)



23% LACK
PRIVATE FLUSH
TOILET
(White houses only 5%)



23% HAVE SIX OR MORE PERSONS
PER DWELLING (Whites 9%). 12% HAVE
MORE THAN ONE AND A HALF PERSON
PER ROOM (Whites 4%).



29% LACK
PRIVATE
BATH
(White houses only 6%)



11% LACK
RUNNING
WATER
(White houses only 1%)



8% LACK
ELECTRIC
LIGHTS
(White houses 0%)

(BUREAU of CENSUS FIGURES for 1947)

Negroes Fear Improvements

Yet a hitch has developed. In January of 1948, the House Appropriations Committee turned down a request by the Planning Commission for \$3,400,000 to start operations of the new District Redevelopment Land Agency. Here is part of the news item which appeared in a Washington newspaper:

HOUSE COMMITTEE REJECTS REQUEST AFTER OBJECTIONS FROM NEGRO GROUP

Slum-clearance funds for Washington were rejected yesterday after Negro objections that the project would establish a "Hitler-like ghetto" for them . . .

William D. Nixon, chairman of the Committee of the (Negro) Federation of Civic Associations, testified:

"In the city of Washington, the cradle of democracy, the colored citizen can no longer select a place of his choice in which to live. General Grant openly states that the colored population, dispossessed by playgrounds, public buildings, parks, and schools will be housed in the far Northeast section in the rear of Anacostia."¹

"A Gross Misunderstanding"

The general referred to by the Negro spokesman is Major General Ulysses S. Grant, 3rd, chairman of the Planning Commission. In reply, he said that there had been a "gross misunderstanding".

For many years there has been a misunderstanding.

According to the Constitution, Negroes have the same right as white people to move anywhere in the District. According to the unanimous decision of the Supreme Court, it is unlawful for the government to deprive them of this right. But what happens to colored people displaced by public improvements?

General Grant's Commission

Uprooted by the government, they are forced by government policy behind racial barricades satisfactory to the Real Estate Board. No private housing will be built for them elsewhere. Nor any public housing. Advice on proper building sites is given by General Grant's Planning Commission. Here are two recent examples of its daily activities:

1. The Commission advised a Negro builder who wished to develop a 60 acre tract of land in Southeast Washington to seek land in the Negro section of the Northeast instead.
2. A Commission spokesman stated that the valley running through Marshall Heights, for which a highway is now being planned, should be the logical dividing line between the white and Negro sections of the far Southeast.

¹ Washington Post, January 3, 1948.

Eighty Years After Appomattox

Major General U. S. Grant, 3rd, takes the view that his Planning Commission must observe the segregation principle "until the community is ready" for mixed neighborhoods. But what is the fact?

The General's Planning Commission, in the name of public improvements, is driving new highways between the races, and evacuating Negroes from areas where they were free to live in his grandfather's day. Eighty years after Appomattox, the Commission is helping to dig racial trenches in the capital.

It is a question for white people whether such improvements are worth the price, or whether an unplanned city wouldn't be better, with a few slums to mar the vistas, than a bright shining capital swept clean of individual rights.

A Desperate Beachhead

To the Negroes of Washington, their old slums are a kind of desperate beachhead on their heritage as Americans. In shacks and huts they once were free to live anywhere in the city. But now they are driven back.

When discrimination is personal, and a matter of each man's private prejudice, Negroes are still free men. But against planned segregation, they are helpless. When their exclusion becomes a good business proposition, when it is capitalized in bonds and banks, when the American government drives them back, then their last chance is gone.

In any event, we would expect to find Negroes occupying the worst housing in the worst neighborhoods. They are assigned, as we shall see, to the meanest and lowest paying jobs. And being rejected by color, they may tend to withdraw by color, and live more or less together.

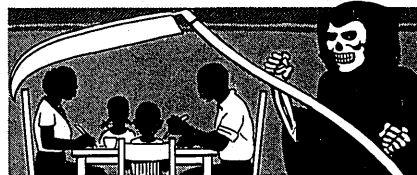
"I Am An American" Day

This tendency can be noted among newly-arrived immigrants, who congregate in the slums of our great cities in different foreign language groups. But in their case, even voluntary segregation is recognized as bad. And efforts are made to narrow the gap.

Before long, these foreign immigrants begin to think of themselves more as Americans than as Italians or Poles or Slovaks, and this process is encouraged. The nation celebrates "I Am An American" Day to instill in newly naturalized citizens a sense of belonging. They are welcomed out into the community.

But with the Negro, is that what happens? He has been an American longer than most Americans, but in the Nation's Capital efforts are now being made to isolate him as a Negro. At what cost?

Chapter 8



The Human Wreckage

Bacteria are broad-minded . . .
Anonymous

A Negro's Disadvantage

An indication of the disadvantages under which Negroes live in the Nation's Capital is furnished by disease and death rates. There is no reason to suppose that Negroes are born less healthy than white people, and it is well known that some of them live to a ripe old age.

Yet the life expectancy of a colored resident of Washington is ten to twelve years less than that of a white resident. In 1944 his chances of dying were 37 per cent greater.¹ Elsewhere in the nation, the colored death rate was only 19 per cent higher than the white death rate.²

The Tuberculosis Yardstick

Tuberculosis, more than any other major disease, reflects food and housing deficiencies. In 1944, a Negro in Washington was more than four times as likely to die from this cause as a white resident, and almost twice as likely to die from it as a Negro living elsewhere.³

Negroes die so often from tuberculosis in Washington because they are segregated by race in the worst jobs and dwellings.* The following area breakdown shows that colored people who had moderate incomes and lived in adequate housing in 1940 had a lower tuberculosis death rate than did slum-dwelling white people.⁴

Group	Population	Deaths	Rate
All Whites in District	474,326	200	42.1
All Negroes in District	187,266	391	207.1
Whites in Central N. W. Slum Area	19,127	26	135.9
Negroes in Far N. E. (low density, middle incomes)	13,223	11	83.2

¹ Report of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia for the year ended June 30, 1945, p. 119.

^{2,3} Vital Statistics of United States, Part I, 1944.

* In 1946, the Negro tuberculosis death rate in the District was 5 times the white death rate.

⁴ Bureau of Vital Statistics, District of Columbia, Health Department, 1940.

Hospital Facilities Inferior

There is no reason to suppose that it is more difficult for colored women to bear children than it is for white women. But in 1946, colored babies born in the District were almost twice as likely to die as white babies, and Negro mothers were six times as likely to die as white mothers.

This rate of maternal mortality indicates that Negroes in Washington do not get sufficient medical care. The District Health Department spends two-thirds of its funds on the care of colored people, and they occupy a third of the hospital beds.

But the facilities available to them are inferior, and far short of their greater need. There are no private or semi-private hospital rooms for Negroes in the District, except for two private rooms at Casualty Hospital, and a few tiny reconverted supply rooms at Freedmen's Hospital.* A colored person who is ill must either accept ward accommodations or go to such cities as New York and Philadelphia.

A Rigid Color Bar

The segregation of Negroes is worse than it was sixty years ago. In 1889, the United States Senate asked for a report on the racial policies of Washington's hospitals, and all of the eleven which then served the city replied that no person was denied admission on account of "race, color, or previous condition of servitude".

Now a fourth of the twelve private hospitals exclude Negroes altogether, and the remainder allot them a limited number of beds in segregated wards. How rigid this color bar can be was discovered on a cold winter morning of 1945 by a young colored woman in childbirth.

Unable to reach the city hospital in time, she rushed to a church-supported hospital. But admission was refused, and the baby was delivered on the sidewalk in front of the door. The staff supplied a sheet to cover the mother and child until the city ambulance arrived to take them away.¹

For White Children Only

The private hospitals now admitting colored patients allot them a limited number of beds in segregated wards. Often these restrictions are in violation of their own professed principles. For example, the bylaws of one church-administered hospital read:

This institution is administered under the auspices of the Church, but its doors are open to all persons—regardless of color.²

* The city has two small proprietary hospitals operated by Negro physician-owners for Negro patients. These have a total of 35 beds.

¹ Lohman, J. D., and Embree, E. R., *The Nation's Capital, Survey Graphic*, Vol. 36, No. 1, Jan., 1947.

² Document D39.

Yet when the fifteen beds assigned to Negro patients at this hospital are filled, colored people are turned away even if bed space is available in the hospital's "white" section. There is a children's ward—for whites only.

In almost all instances, the segregated accommodations for Negroes are inferior to those for whites. At Casualty Hospital, colored patients are housed in an old, deteriorated building, and their visitors must come and go through the ambulance entrance, not the main entrance.

High Infant Mortality

Without the two public hospitals, forced by law to accept colored people, the bulk of the Negro population would be without hospital beds of any kind. These hospitals are federally operated Freedmen's (100 per cent Negro), and the much larger Gallinger Municipal (70 per cent Negro). Both of them operate on inadequate budgets.

At Gallinger, where half of the District's colored patients are segregated, the city has tolerated conditions of neglect that have long been an open scandal. A hospital survey in 1946, found "an inordinately high mortality" among infants. It criticized the two white medical schools then staffing the hospital for not having been more outspoken about deficiencies.¹ In 1947, an article in the Saturday Evening Post told the world:²

Gallinger Municipal Hospital puts the legs of its beds in pans of water to keep the cockroaches from snuggling up to the patients.

Doctors Segregate Doctors

The capital is fortunate in having Howard University Medical School, one of the country's two medical schools for Negroes. The presence of this school, rated Class A by the American Medical Association, has made Washington one of the few cities in the country where the proportion of Negro physicians is comparable to that of white physicians. Here are 26 of the country's 72 certified Negro specialists, and 200 licensed Negro practitioners.

But these Negro doctors are segregated by white doctors. They are barred from the District Medical Society, and from the American Medical Association. They are barred from all the twelve private hospitals of the city, and from federally supported St. Elizabeth's Hospital for mental diseases (with 2,500 Negro patients). There is only one hospital (348-bed Freedmen's) in the city to which a Negro physician can take a private patient.

The medical policy of the hospital boards in Washington is largely determined by a few entrenched leaders of the white medical profession. They profess to believe in the sanctity of the doctor-patient relationship,

¹ Council of Social Agencies, Metropolitan Health and Hospital Survey, Washington, 1946.

² Morrow, Hugh, Saturday Evening Post, March 22, 1947.

but they separate the Negro physician from his patient at the hospital door.*

Damage To The Nation

Not only are Negro doctors handicapped in their treatment of patients, but the students of Howard Medical School are deprived of available clinical training. The two white medical schools in the city enjoy teaching privileges at all the principal hospitals. But Howard, which graduates almost half the Negro physicians of the country, has been restricted to the inadequate facilities of a single hospital (Freedmen's).

Until recently the policy-making white doctors refused to permit Howard students access even to Gallinger Municipal Hospital, where most of the patients are colored. This hospital has 1,600 free beds and the only contagious disease unit in Washington. Not until the Federal Government intervened in the spring of 1948 was an agreement reached to admit Negro students to this public institution.

Contact Is Being Lost

Among educated medical men, segregation has deepened in the last eighty years. When Howard Medical School was organized in 1868, white and colored doctors worked together to get it established. An inter-racial medical society was organized in 1869, and almost won recognition from the American Medical Association.

Within the District Medical Society itself, there was strong agitation for many years for the admission of Negro physicians. As late as 1894, a Negro applicant failed by only a few votes of the necessary two-thirds for election.

But a Negro doctor no longer dreams of getting into the Medical Society. As the Negro profession has struggled to develop in training and skill, it has become more and more isolated. Negro specialists have gradually supplanted white physicians on the staffs of Howard Medical School and Freedman's Hospital so that even this source of contact is being lost.

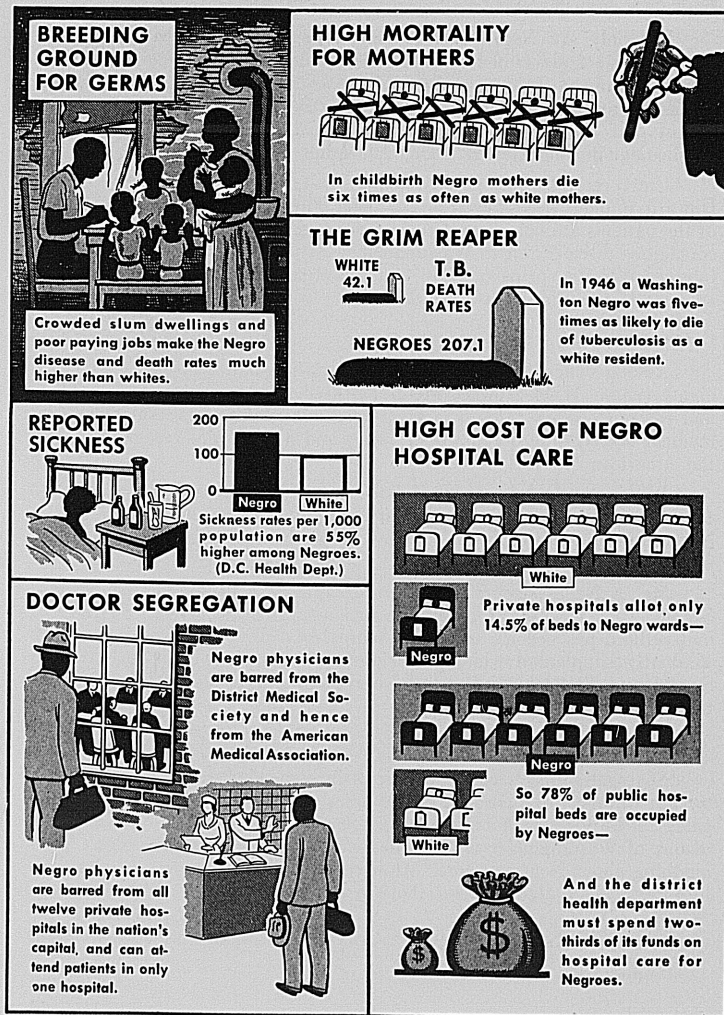
A Wall of Ignorance

Segregation has a perverse logic of its own. It forces those segregated to turn inward for their own protection. And in the minds of the segregators, it builds a wall of ignorance. Explained a member of the faculty of one of Washington's white medical schools: "White doctors don't know anything about Negro doctors. How could they when they don't let them join the Society, and don't see them in hospitals or anywhere?"

* One hospital has granted a few Negro doctors limited "privileges" which involve transferring their patients to white physicians. But they are permitted to maintain indirect contact with the patients, and to attend staff conferences weekly.

¹ Document D34.

SEGREGATION BRINGS DISEASE AND DEATH



White physicians are genuinely surprised when they have occasion to learn of the professional standing of Negro medical men in the capital. As one white doctor explained: "Negro physicians are not thought of as physicians but as Negroes."¹

This attitude of the white doctors is similar to that exhibited by other professional men in Washington—lawyers, diplomats, preachers, and admirals. Their sense of status is offended by the thought of professional equality with men who are not even allowed in theaters and restaurants.

No Private Matter

But segregation in medicine means more than the denial of equal opportunity within the profession. Insofar as it limits the opportunity of Negro doctors and medical students to use and perfect their skills, it damages the community and the nation.

Public health is not a private matter. Public money was used to build the recent additions to George Washington Hospital and Georgetown University Hospital. Yet both of these hospitals now limit the number of beds for Negro patients, and exclude Negro doctors from staff positions and courtesy privileges.*

Federal funds have been pledged to three other "private" hospitals (Emergency, Episcopal, and Garfield) which are soon to be merged in a new 1,500-bed medical center at a cost of \$20,000,000. But these hospitals also limit Negro patients and exclude Negro doctors.

Bacteria Are Broad-Minded

No amount of money spent on hospital and medical care can offset the disadvantage of being a Negro in Washington. As long as colored people are segregated in the worst slums and the worst jobs, their health will be inferior to that of unsegregated white people.

But unless a condition is placed on future hospital appropriations that patients be admitted on the basis of illness rather than color, the American taxpayer will be denied full value for his money, and those who need hospital attention the most will get the least.

Unless it is agreed that any qualified doctor, whatever the color of his skin, can follow his patient to the hospital, then these new facilities will be used to further deprive Negro physicians of their practice and of their chance to serve the community.

In the treatment of illness, segregation doesn't make sense. Colored people can be segregated, but not disease and death. Bacteria draw no color line.

¹ Document D36.

* Recently, Negro girls have been assigned as practical nurses in the Georgetown University Hospital.

Chapter 9



A Colored Horatio Alger

The haughty American nation . . . makes the Negro clean its boots and then proves the . . . inferiority of the Negro by the fact that he is a bootblack.

An Irish Observer

For Whites Only

If Horatio Alger had a colored face, he would have a hard time in the capital today. He would be first judged, not by his merit, but by his skin. On this account he would be excluded from most jobs, just as he would be excluded from downtown theaters and restaurants. Here are some of the jobs "for whites only".

"WHITE JOBS" ¹		
Men	Per Cent White (1940)	Per Cent Negro (1940)
Boilermakers	100.00	0.0
Motormen	99.6	0.4
Telegraph operators	99.4	0.6
Bookkeepers and accountants	99.4	0.6
Conductors	99.3	0.7
Machinists	98.6	1.4
Telegraph, telephone linemen	98.3	1.7
Metal workers	97.6	2.4
Printing craftsmen	96.6	3.4
Women		
Stenographers, typists	99.0	1.0
Telephone operators	98.6	1.4
Clerical workers	97.3	2.7
Librarians	96.9	3.1

Closed Door Policy

The proportion of Negroes who work for a living in Washington is higher than for whites. They work longer hours, and go to work at an earlier age. The percentage of Negro teen-agers (16 and 17 year olds) who are gainfully employed is twice that of whites.

But they are excluded from most skilled trades by the craft unions, and from whole industries by management policy. In retail trade, com-

¹ Source: 16th U. S. Census, Population, The Labor Force, 3rd Series, pp. 21-24.

merce, utilities, communications, and transportation, they have little chance. A colored boy, no matter how ambitious, cannot hope to become a street-car motorman.

The telephone company employs no colored mechanics or linemen. One of its offices employing 35 persons is staffed with colored switchboard operators, and the company claims to be satisfied with their performance. But no further hiring of Negroes is planned, although colored operators are successfully used in other cities.

The big department stores deny Negro women a chance to become clerks—even one large bargain store whose customers are two-thirds Negro. "Do you realize," said a store manager, "that in this town you can't put a colored girl behind the counter?"

Asked if he ever tried it, he said: "No. You see, the fallacy is that every store wants to cater to the 'best' in town."

The "Negro Jobs"

Segregation in employment is a form of bondage. When a quarter of the population is barred from certain jobs because of its color, it must take what is left as surely as if it were condemned to involuntary servitude by law. Here are some of the jobs that are left for Negroes in Washington:

"NEGRO JOBS" ²	
Men	Per Cent Negro (1940)
Charmen, janitors, porters	92
Laborers, utilities	91
Laborers, construction	80
Servants	77
Laborers, manufacturing	76
Elevator operators	74
Laborers, trade	72
Laborers, railroad	71
Cooks	68
Laundry operatives	60
Messengers	57
Women	
Elevator operators	89
Cooks	85
Charwomen	82
Servants	78

Just as a Negro is expected to eat standing up at downtown lunch counters, so he is expected to work standing up, or in a kneeling position, or in some job that tags him as a servant to the white man. In 1940, three-fourths of all Negro job-holders were employed as laborers, domestics, or service workers, while only one-eighth of white employees were in these categories.

¹ Document B16.

² Source: 16th U. S. Census, Population, The Labor Force, 3rd Series, pp. 21-24.

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¹ Document B16.

² Source: 16th U. S. Census, Population, The Labor Force, 3rd Series, pp. 21-24.

The City's Color Bar

Even the city government forces colored people to accept a servant status. Except in segregated units, and in the office of the Recorder of Deeds, Negroes are employed almost exclusively in such capacities as laborers, janitors, and elevator operators. Garbage trucks are manned by Negro crews, but the drivers are usually white, and are paid at a higher rate.

A Negro cannot get a job as a water-meter reader, a building inspector, a weights and measure inspector, or as a guard in a jail. No Negro who applies will be accepted for work above a menial level in the office of the Vehicles and Traffic Department, the Collector of Taxes, the Engineer's Office, or the Purchasing Office.

Recently an official in one District agency complained in a private conversation that he was having great difficulty in finding personnel for his engineering department. "Every time we went to Civil Service they sent us a Negro, and of course we don't use them," he said. "That means we have to go outside Civil Service, and we're having a hard time."

A Negro Arrested Grant

Seventy-five years ago, a Negro policeman arrested General Grant for speeding in the city streets, and was congratulated by the General for doing his duty.* There are 153 Negro policemen in the city today, but as a rule they are assigned to Negro areas where they have little opportunity to make general arrests. There is only one "Negro scout car" in Washington.

There are even fewer Negro firemen, and they are concentrated at the two Negro fire stations. Both Negro companies are overmanned, and the Fire Chief has proposed that some of the surplus of colored recruits be used to fill vacancies at the many white fire stations. The proposal has been bitterly attacked, and the Chief has been criticized in a resolution passed by the A. F. of L. Fireman's Local (white).

One white rookie told a Negro private he would quit if Negroes were admitted to his company, because "you fellows have an educational advantage over us, and we'd never get any promotions."² Sixteen Negro firemen have been appointed from civil service since the war, and all of them are college men—an indication of the lack of openings elsewhere.³

Segregated In Poverty

Insofar as Negroes are assigned by color to the least desirable jobs, they are assigned by color to poverty, and become as a race a social problem

¹ Document 27C.

* General Grant was President at the time, and was driving a spirited team of horses at a dangerous rate of speed. Grant was apparently the only President ever arrested. He put up a cash bond of \$20, but did not appear at police court.

² Document 31C.

³ Document 32C.

to the community. In 1940, a man in a "Negro job" was ten to twenty times as likely as a man in a "white job" to be making less than \$1,000 a year.

"NEGRO JOBS" ¹		Per Cent of Workers Earning Below \$1,000	"WHITE JOBS" ²		Per Cent of Workers Earning Below \$1,000
Men			Men		
Servants		90	Motormen		5
Laborers, construction		78	Civil Engineers		6
Laborers, trade		76	Printing craftsmen		7
Elevator operators		74	Boilermakers		8
Laundry operatives		74	Machinists		9
Charmen, janitors		72	Railroad conductors		3
Women			Women		
Servants		92	Librarians		12
Cooks		86	Clerical workers		17

Last To Be Promoted

"Laundry, Cleaning, & Dying" is a good example of an industry open to Negroes. The hours are long, the work is hot and damp, and in 1940, three-fourths of all laundry employees made less than \$1,000 a year. Even here the best jobs have been reserved for whites.

Some Negro up-grading occurred during the war when whites left the industry for better jobs. Negroes are now permitted to sort and mark laundry, once considered a "white job". But whether they can hold such war-time gains depends on the general character of the labor market, not on their individual ability.

As long as jobs are passed out by color, Negroes will be the last to be promoted and the first to be demoted; the last to be hired and the first to be fired. Their jobs are by definition the left-over jobs, the jobs not wanted by whites.

An Odd Development

Thus Negroes are condemned by color to chronic unemployment. In the abnormally good year of 1947, 6 per cent were out of jobs and looking for work—compared to 2 per cent of whites. In the better than average year of 1940, 17 per cent were unemployed, and only 7 per cent of whites. During the last depression, Negro unemployment rose above 40 per cent. (U. S. census figures)

Strangely enough, some white people blame the Negro for his exclusion from jobs. But unemployment is not a racial characteristic of colored people. It is a new thing for them to have their labor not wanted, and to be shunted as a working force. Once they brought high prices on the labor market.

An odd development has occurred. A century ago, slave-owners thought it dangerous to allow slaves to get an education, yet were eager to develop their skills as workmen. But in the capital today, we send Negroes

^{1, 2} Source: 16th U. S. Census, Population, The Labor Force, 3rd Series, p. 30.

NEGROES DENIED EQUAL CHANCE TO MAKE A LIVING

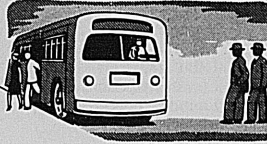
CLOSED-DOOR EMPLOYMENT POLICY—



Craft unions exclude Negroes from skilled trades.



Management excludes Negroes from whole industries.



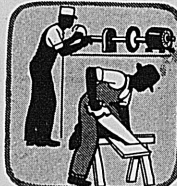
During the war the transit company advertised for white operators 200 miles away rather than hire Negroes.

FORCES NEGROES INTO LEAST DESIRABLE JOBS



THEY MAKE UP 26% OF ALL WORKERS IN THE DISTRICT—

BUT THEY HOLD— 72% of the domestic service worker and unskilled labor jobs—



21% of the semi-skilled and skilled jobs—



6% of the professional, proprietor, managers, clerks and officials AND ONLY— jobs.

EARN LESS



Negroes are concentrated in low-paying jobs.

HAVE LEAST SECURITY



The Negro is last to be hired and first to be fired.

UNEMPLOYMENT



During last depression Negro unemployment rose above 40%.

START WORK YOUNGER

Employment of Negro teen-agers in the district is twice that of white.



Negroes work longer hours than whites.

NEGROES SQUEEZED OUT



In 1890 nine out of ten barbers in the capital were colored—



But in 1940 this figure dropped to three out of ten.

to school and tell them they have equal rights, and then deny them a chance to show what they can do.

A Tradition of Enterprise

In the days of slavery, many skilled Negroes were able to buy their own freedom and that of their kinfolk. Partly from this cause, the number of free Negroes doubled in Washington in the thirty years before 1860. "There were many skilled carpenters, bricklayers, shoemakers, stonemasons, wheelwrights, blacksmiths, plasterers, printers, cabinetmakers, cab drivers, and draymen."¹

Negroes once played an important role in the city's construction industry. But since the Emancipation Proclamation, they have been losing out in the skilled trades. With the exception of a few bricklayers, plasterers, and cement finishers, they are now accepted only as common laborers by labor unions and most contractors.

A half century ago when most men were self-employed, and worked with their own tools, Negroes made a living on their own merits in many fields. The census of 1890 showed that 20,000 Negroes were in business in Washington out of a total colored population of 75,000.² Nine out of ten barbers in the city were colored.

But in 1940, the colored barbers had dropped to three out of ten. Similiar losses have been sustained in other specialized fields. Negroes were once known as chefs, caterers, and restaurant operators, but in the kitchens of hotels and large restaurants, they have been relegated to potato-peeling jobs.

An Organized World

Recently Negroes have staged a minor comeback in the kitchens of large establishments in Washington. But this is not because of a sudden increase in their skill. It has been due partly to the war-time labor shortage, and partly to the strong anti-discrimination policy of the Brotherhood of Cooks, Pastry Cooks, and Kitchen Employees.

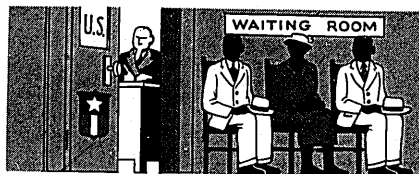
Making a living is no longer an individual matter in Washington, or anywhere else. Individuals do not often set the conditions under which they are employed. Industry is organized, and so is labor, and society itself is organized. Either they will be organized against the Negro, or they will be organized for equal rights.

On this question, there can be no neutral policy and no private answer. The answer that is given in the Nation's Capital will commit us all.

¹ Washington: City and Capital, American Guide Series, 1937, p. 72.

² Washington, Booker T., in Gibson, J. W., and Croghan, W. H., The Colored American, 1902, p. 239.

Chapter 10



Uncle Sam's Example

As I visited your government offices . . . I gradually became aware that Negroes were employed there almost solely in menial capacities, mostly as messengers, or very low clerks, and in a few departments were not to be seen at all.

Visitor from Denmark

In spite of all its principles and all its professions, its executive orders and directives, the United States Government is systematically denying the colored citizens of the capital equal opportunity in employment, and is setting an example of racial discrimination to the city and nation.

Beginnings of Segregation

The color bar has not always been honored by the American government. During the last half of the 19th century, Negroes served as Register of the Treasury, Auditor of the Navy, as Consul, Collector of Customs, and in many other responsible posts at home and abroad.

Colored employees were not segregated in the Federal agencies from the time of the Civil War down through the administration of Theodore Roosevelt. During the last term of Grover Cleveland, when southern Democrats held positions of leadership in both houses of Congress, the number of Negro clerical jobs actually increased.

Jim Crow seems to have been first recognized in the administration of William Howard Taft. Twenty years ago, a Negro leader in Washington recalled:

Mr. Taft . . . segregated the census takers in this city in 1910, restricting white workers to white, and black workers to black, often duplicating work, as most blocks had white and black residents. And worst of all, he announced that Negroes should not hold office where white people complained.¹

The Blow Was Struck

But segregation did not become general government policy until the presidency of Woodrow Wilson. His election in 1912 brought to power

¹ Thomas, N., President of the Washington Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Washington Eagle, June 6, 1927.

in Washington a new kind of southern congressmen, politicians who had won office on the pledge to maintain and extend "white supremacy". Immediately they set about putting the Negro "in his place" in the capital.

An organization known as the "Democratic Fair Play Association" was formed for this purpose. Among its leaders were Senators Hoke Smith of Georgia, Ben (Pitchfork) Tillman of South Carolina, and James K. Vardaman of Mississippi. President Wilson was made an honorary member. Meetings were held to stir up the local populace. For example, the following is a reprint of a handbill circulated at the time.¹

SHALL THE NEGRO RULE?

All other questions are minimized under the shadow of social equality and preference for Negroes in the employ of the government of the United States.

SENATOR JAMES K. VARDAMAN

And other prominent speakers will address the people at a public meeting to be held under the auspices of the National Democratic Fair Play Association which stands for segregation of the races in government employment, and "reorganization of the civil service" as declared in the National Democratic platform of 1912. At this meeting the policy of appointing Negroes to government positions will be fully and freely discussed.

AT OLD MASONIC TEMPLE

COR. 9th AND F STS. N.W.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT, AUGUST 6, 1913

ADMIT BEARER

AT 8 O'CLOCK

Segregation Becomes a Policy

In the Bureau of Engraving, Negro and white employees were isolated from each other at lunch time. Separate lavatories were installed in the Treasury Department. In 1914 the Civil Service Commission adopted a rule requiring all job applicants to submit a photograph, and stopped calling Negroes for the higher clerical jobs. Every Negro clerk (with two exceptions) in the Auditor's office of the Post Office was reduced in rank.

¹ La Follette's 1913.

Bills were introduced in Congress to segregate Negro employees by law, to re-establish Jim Crow transportation in the District, and even to repeal the 14th and 15th Amendments. These measures did not pass, but they indicate the general nature of the assault on Negro rights.

With the government setting the example for the community, Negroes lost what rights they had previously enjoyed in Washington theaters and restaurants, and were systematically segregated in housing and private employment. During this period the city was growing rapidly.

The resulting racial tensions, aggravated by the dislocations of the first World War, culminated in the Washington race riot of 1919. After three days of bloody fighting, the riot was brought to an end by a drenching and prolonged rain.

The Government's Example

The colored people of Washington have never recovered from the blow that struck them in the time of Woodrow Wilson. Although sporadic anti-discrimination measures have been sponsored by succeeding administrations, the example set by the government has been one of exclusion and segregation in menial jobs.*

As late as 1938, 90 per cent of all the government's Negro employees were confined to the lowest custodial-labor status. During the labor shortage of World War II, real gains were made by Negroes in Federal service, and at one time only 40 per cent of them were in the lowest category. Now, however, the percentage is rising again.

Only in time of emergency, when the government can't help itself, is the Negro given much chance to show what he can do in the service of his country.

Anatomy of Discrimination

The Ramspeck Act of 1940, the Civil Service Regulations, and a series of Presidential Executive Orders all forbid racial discrimination in Federal employment. Yet discrimination prevails in all departments in varying forms, usually as a matter of accepted practice. There are three general types of situation.

First, there is the exclusion pattern. Under it Negroes are hired only for the menial jobs that whites will not accept. It is typified by the State Department, the Justice Department, the Bureau of the Budget, the Federal Trade Commission, the Federal Reserve Board and various other independent agencies.

Second, there is the segregation pattern. It is typified by the government's "factories" which employ many Negroes but keep them in the lowest routine jobs in separate units. The Census Bureau, the Govern-

* The government employs more than a third of all workers in the District of Columbia, and sets the pattern of employment practices and wages for the entire capital. In 1940, 16 per cent of the city's colored employees had Federal jobs, and 40 per cent of the white employees.

ment Printing Office, and the Bureau of Engraving and Printing belong in this group.

Third, there is the integration pattern—where jobs are open to Negroes at all levels on equal terms. It is extremely rare, and was largely a war-time phenomenon. War agencies like the Office of Price Administration and the National War Labor Board made some approaches to this practice.*

All Federal agencies fall into one or more of these general types of employment practice. The examples which follow are not singled out to focus attention upon specific agencies. They illustrate the conditions which exist throughout the government service.**

In most Washington offices, Negroes are excluded from all but the lowest custodial and clerical jobs. The State Department is one example of the kind of chance Negroes have under this racial policy.

STATE DEPARTMENT—EXAMPLE OF EXCLUSION

The existence of discrimination against minority groups in this country has an adverse effect upon our relations with other countries.

Acting Secretary of State, 1946

A Celebrated Messenger

Until 1940, the State Department refused to hire colored people in Washington except as chauffeurs, messengers, or janitors.*** One Negro who came close to breaking this rule was a celebrated messenger in the Office of the Secretary who retired after sixty years' service.

In his sixty years, this Negro saw many Secretaries come and go. He was relied upon for his knowledge of diplomatic ceremonial and protocol, and was taken to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. While he remained a messenger in rank, he was rewarded with clerk's pay in his old age.

A Slight Improvement

During World War II, a high official of the Department tried with slight success to break the racial barrier at the clerical level. As the agency mushroomed in size, Negroes were hired in the lowest clerical grades at routine jobs, a few messengers were upgraded, and toward the end of the war a colored expert on colonial affairs, who had proved his high ability in a war agency, was brought in as an Associate Division Chief.

But otherwise there was little improvement. At the close of the war, the Department was required to absorb parts of three major war

* This is also true of the Public Housing Administration (formerly Federal Public Housing Authority), a non-war agency.

** All incidents reported are documented in the files of the National Committee.

*** Between 1924 and 1940 no Negro was employed in the Department above the custodial level. The number of Negroes in the professional Foreign Service is less than half as large as it was forty years ago.

agencies in which Negroes occupied a variety of responsible posts. On several occasions, however, old-line officials of the Department have intervened to prevent the hiring and promotion of Negroes by these newly-added units.*

Psychology of Exclusion

The State Department is one of the most class-conscious of all the old-line government agencies. Its tone has been set by the career men who staff the basic policy-making offices. The explanation given by many people in the Department is summed up by a ranking officer:

The attitude is not southern reactionary or plain Negro-hating, but rather the conservatism you find on the Main Line or in the Back Bay. These people who dominate the Department are people who come from, or have the attitudes characteristic of, what most people regard as High Society . . . I suppose it's a matter of regarding Negroes without any questioning at all as naturally belonging in the servant sort of role. (Document 302)

This class-consciousness permeates down through the ranks. Even in the lowest-rated jobs, where Negroes have the best chance, there is a strong feeling of caste. A high administrative officer reported his trouble in implementing the war-time anti-discrimination objectives:

The results were simply pitiful. We finally got a few colored girls in the mimeograph room. After a great deal more effort, the typing pool finally agreed to take a couple. Two or three days later, I asked the pool supervisor how things were coming, and she replied that she had solved the problem completely, that everything was going beautifully. I asked her what she had done, and she showed me a screen in one corner of the big room—behind which the two colored girls were sitting. I stopped that immediately. (Document 301)

All government agencies hesitate to hire Negroes in fear of "bad public relations". But the State Department is super-sensitive on this point. Moreover, according to a responsible official, "it has a strong tradition and a natural conservatism brought on by the delicate and difficult work it does."

Fighting Russia's Propaganda

The statement of any operating official that he will not hire Negroes is taken as final. In practice, this means that they are excluded from all the "prestige" divisions of the Department.

In recent years the State Department has become concerned over propaganda that Russia is spreading about racial discrimination in the United States. Asked whether the Department was embarrassed by this propaganda, one officer thought for a moment, and said:

Well, you know that we put out a magazine called "America", which we send to Russia for distribution there. In almost every issue, that magazine carries pictures of Negroes and whites doing things together,

* This experience is common where war agencies have been taken over by the permanent departments.

or "a spread" on some famous Negro like George Washington Carver. On the information side, we are fighting their propaganda. (Document 303)

Bugaboo of White Supremacy

However, there are many State Department officials who believe that more Negroes could be employed to advantage, both in the capital and abroad. One of them recently proposed that colored Americans be used on a Far Eastern program of the agency. He reports:

I got the answer from people who have spent a good deal of time in that part of the world that Negroes would be a good deal more effective than whites in the actual administration of the program, but that they might have some difficulties inside the staff. It is quite generally true that the bugaboo of white supremacy is a great handicap to us in the Far East. (Document 309a)

One Department officer, when asked how he thought the traditional exclusion policy might be overcome, made the following suggestion:

I would seek out the soft spots in the agency—the ones that are bad but have special reasons for being good. The first place I'd hit would be the political divisions, and my argument would be that the agency is trying to sell democracy all around the world so it had better start practicing some of it. (Document 309b)

But another experienced officer pointed out the similarity between the practices of the State Department and of many other agencies. He concluded:

If you fight this thing by starting at the bottom, breaking down one barrier at a time and gradually giving Negroes a chance at better jobs, you don't get far . . . Only the President can do this job. My experience has convinced me completely that the top people, starting with the President himself, must make it perfectly clear to their subordinates all the way down the line that they want every American to share equally in the chances to hold a job at any level. (Document 319)

BUREAU "X"—EXAMPLE OF SEGREGATION

A Case Study of Segregation

Instead of excluding Negroes, some agencies segregate them in separate units under supervisors of their own race. This is the practice in most departments which employ Negroes in large numbers, like Bureau "X".

Prior to 1940, Bureau "X" employed only a few Negroes outside the custodial labor category. But thousands of workers were added during the war, and at the height of the labor shortage almost half the personnel was colored. The decision to segregate the races was justified by the argument that it would reduce racial friction, and give Negroes more chance for advancement.

To determine the result, a detailed case study of the Bureau was made in 1947. Employment records were made available on the understanding that the name of the Bureau would be withheld, and that the information would be used to illustrate a general situation.

Whites on Top

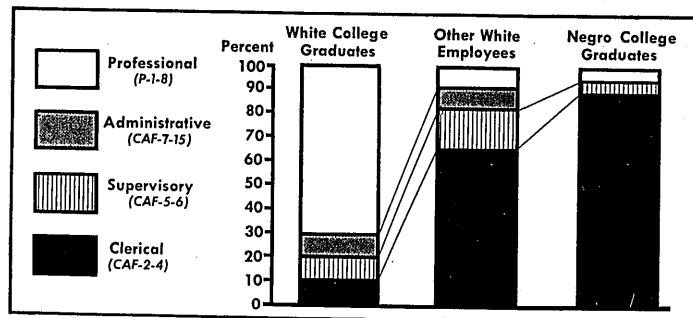
The records show that almost all Negroes were employed in the lower brackets. Only 4 per cent rated higher than clerks, compared to 43 per cent of white employees. Even within the clerical classification, the same pattern appeared. Four-fifths of the lowest-salaried clerks were colored; four-fifths of the highest-salaried clerks were white.

Yet the Bureau attracts many highly trained Negroes who have no opportunity elsewhere. In each of the four major grade groups, the proportion of Negro college graduates was higher than among whites. 12 per cent of the colored clerks and only 3 per cent of the white clerks had college degrees. Nine out of 10 Negro college graduates were employed as clerks. Nine out of 10 white college graduates had better jobs.

Chart 4 shows that white college graduates held better jobs than other white employees, and that the latter held better jobs than Negro college graduates. There was very little difference between the kind of jobs held by highly educated and poorly educated Negroes. Little attempt is made to place Negroes according to their ability and skill.

Chart 4

Occupational Distribution of White College Graduates, Other White Employees and Negro College Graduates — Bureau "X," March 22, 1947¹



6 to 1 Odds Against Negroes

To get a closer comparison, a sample grouping was made of forty pairs of white and colored employees who were all hired in the fiscal year 1946, and who matched not only in schooling, but in age, sex, marital status, date hired, division in which hired, job in which hired, and beginning salary. The Bureau considers that all these eight factors have a bearing on work efficiency and chances for promotion.

¹ Source of data: Personnel Division, Bureau "X".

The records show that the two races had the same average efficiency rating for the beginning months on the job. Three whites in the sample and eight Negroes took and passed in-service training courses—indicating that the colored group had at least as much desire to get ahead. A few more Negroes than whites had the advantage of veterans' status.

But a check in 1947 showed that the forty white employees had received a total of twelve promotions, and the forty colored employees only two promotions. In other words, when background, initial job assignment, and actual work efficiency were roughly equated, whites were promoted six times as frequently as Negroes.¹

Negroes Are Held Down

To get the story behind the figures, interviews were conducted at all levels. An Operations Officer told in a few words one reason why it is impossible under a segregated system to promote individuals according to their ability:

When you have segregation, you make work assignments on a color basis, and the Negro units automatically end up with the simplest operations. This means competent Negroes are held down to these jobs, and the Division does not get the benefit of what they could produce.²

For example, 97 per cent of the Bureau's two hundred card-punch operators (CAF 2) are Negroes. This is low-paying monotonous work, with little future. On the other hand, the great majority of the tabulating machine operators (CAF 3, 4, 5) are white; and all the jobs in the machine division above CAF 4 are held by whites.

An administrative officer explained this situation in terms of the labor market. "The only people we've been able to get," he said, "are Negroes."³ He agreed that many Negroes hired as card-punch operators are as competent as whites hired at higher levels.

A Ceiling on Promotions

Segregation means that colored people are employed by units in the lowest jobs, and it imposes an arbitrary ceiling on their individual promotion. This is because any employee who rises above a unit level must usually give orders to both colored and white units. For a colored person to be allowed to have such authority over whites would challenge the segregation principle, which assumes the inferiority of the whole race segregated.

Considerable embarrassment was caused in the Bureau during the war when the sudden expansion of a special project placed a Negro woman supervisor over new white employees. The director of the project wanted the woman kept in charge because she was the only person familiar with

¹ Source of data: Personnel Division, Bureau "X".

² Document 16.

³ Documents 3c, 29.

the work. But his request was refused, and for two more months she ran the expanded unit without a rating and trained the new white employees, including the incoming white supervisor.

For another six months, she stayed in the background, did all the work-scheduling, kept all the control files, handled all the final reports, and gave advice whenever called upon. Finally, however, she asked to be transferred. "The new supervisor was resenting me," she said, "and the whole situation was quite unpleasant."¹

No Competition Allowed

The ceiling affects every colored employee. Whenever there is an office vacancy at a high level, white workers are moved up one notch all along the line. But colored unit supervisors stay where they are, and bottle the ambition of those below.

Instead of producing good racial relations, segregation creates a deep sense of frustration and resentment. In the midst of the war, an altercation between a colored employee of the Bureau and a white employee almost caused a riot in the building. Most colored employees try to work out philosophies of adjustment, like the unit supervisor who said:

I'm told that I am as high as I can get so I haven't any ambition anymore, and I get used to it. I know it, my boss knows it, and he knows I know it. I'm no radical. I think I understand about these whites, and I make a lot of excuses to my kids for them.²

Yet this same woman expressed regret that segregation was so complete in the Bureau's recreation program. "There isn't even any competition between the white and colored teams," she said. "If they would just have that—it would be something, and you can bet we would put out the best team you ever saw, just to beat them."

O.P.A.—EXAMPLE OF INTEGRATION

A Third Approach

A third approach is possible to the problem of race in employment. This is to hire Negroes like other people on the basis of merit rather than color, and to let them find their place in open competition. Some of the war agencies tried this experiment, and the most successful was the Office of Price Administration.

These war agencies had several things in common. They were new, with no office tradition against Negroes. They were set up in a period of labor shortage, and needed all the qualified help they could get. And the nature of the war itself created a sentiment against master-race doctrines.

At the outset, O.P.A. adopted a firm policy. The anti-discrimination Directives of the President and the Civil Service Commission were declared

¹ Document 24.

² Document 23.

to be the policy of the agency, and the Administrator warned: "This is not a matter in which the personal views or prejudices of individuals are expected to control."

No Tradition Against Negroes

An important consideration was O.P.A.'s particular role in the war. The agency was required to deal with problems at the consumer level, and for this reason it attracted an unusually large number of officials who were predisposed to regard Negroes as people, and to deal with them on a man-to-man basis.

Because of the newness of the agency, and the nature of its job, an air of informality prevailed. During the early months of 1942, one of the colored attorneys needed a secretary. A colored girl was certified to him, and he accepted her. Then a white colleague, for whom a white secretary had just been hired, suggested they switch secretaries. This was done, and with no difficulty.

The same spirit of direct action existed at other levels. Early in the life of the agency, union members of both colors walked together into the small cafeteria originally set aside for Negroes so that it became greatly overcrowded. The management thereupon made this cafeteria into an executives' dining-room, leaving the main cafeteria as a place where all office workers could sit as they pleased.

How Negroes Were Accepted

Personnel officials never accepted at face value the refusal of an operating chief to accept Negroes certified to him. But the strategy adopted was one of persuasion and example rather than coercion. Care was taken in filling important vacancies.

A highly qualified Negro economist was offered to a Division which was desperate to have a long-standing vacancy filled. After some hesitation, the Division accepted him. He made a brilliant record, and a favorable impression on the businessmen who came daily to the office. One of them finally persuaded him to leave O.P.A., and take a high-paying job in private industry.

One O.P.A. official had a job which required him to receive many important visitors, and he protested when a very competent colored girl was certified as his secretary. Although he was a southerner, he insisted he had no personal objection. But he said he was afraid his visitors would object. Finally he agreed to try her out, and to his relief he found no evidence of damaged public relations. Soon he was bragging about his new secretary.

Public objections were fewer than expected. Only two incidents were reported. Once a congressman intervened to secure the transfer of two

¹ O.P.A. Administrative Order No. 13, Supplement No. 6: Fair Employment Practice, Feb. 16, 1943.

white constituents who objected to working under a Negro supervisor. Once an O.P.A. District Office in the South protested against the use of a Negro who had been sent there as a field representative for a door-to-door survey.

Union-Management Cooperation

An important factor was the aggressive anti-discrimination policy of the office union. In the winter of 1942-43, the union pressed charges involving racial discrimination against a Branch Chief, and after extended public hearings he was forced to resign. According to the union, this case had a strong influence on all supervisors.

An Administrator can lay down a fair employment policy, and the Personnel Division can implement it, but management doesn't like to bring charges against its own officials. A union, however, is less interested in administrative harmony than in fair working conditions for its members, and for this reason is often in a better position to police discrimination.

At O.P.A., there was a good working relationship between the union and the agency chiefs. Once the union had filed charges, the personnel officer was able to approach the responsible official in a helpful spirit and say: "Look here, I don't know much about this, but the union is raising the devil, and I may be able to help you out."

A Certain Pride Developed

Before long, many grievance cases between white and colored persons were being handled where the question of race was not involved and not even mentioned. As the months passed, the practice of racial equality became a habit and a tradition. A certain pride developed.

A personnel officer stated: "I was as prejudiced as anyone, but that's not the way we do things here." In interview after interview, white employees reported how their own attitudes had changed. Many of them were southerners who had never thought of a Negro "except with a hoe in his hand".

The effect on colored employees was like a tonic. Many said they felt for the first time in their lives like independent, responsible, respected men and women.

Morale Was High

Whatever its faults, O.P.A. came closer than any other government agency to eliminating the problem of race in employment. Out in the open for everyone to see, Negroes worked with whites at all levels from messenger to Assistant General Counsel of the agency.

As in other war agencies, personnel was constantly changing. Yet morale was always high at O.P.A. Even in its death agonies, there was an unmistakable esprit de corps. In the summer of 1946, when for two weeks the agency was without funds or legal authority, employee turnover dropped

to the lowest point in months, merely on the basis of an appeal from the Administrator.

What of the Future?

Some exceptions marred O.P.A.'s record of equal opportunity for all, and these exceptions indicate the difficulties ahead for all the agency's colored employees. The exceptions were in the following offices:

1. Two price control divisions, staffed by business-trained executives. These executives handled all their own recruitment and insisted on following the traditional private industry policy of excluding Negroes from white-collar jobs.

2. Another division, whose top personnel came to O.P.A. directly from old-line government agencies. They insisted on following the traditional government policy of segregating Negroes in the lowest jobs.

3. The branch offices of O.P.A. in other cities. They insisted on following the local community custom of excluding Negroes from most good jobs.

The Evil We Fought Against

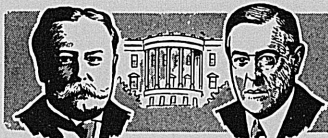
When the war ended and O.P.A. began to curtail its activities, the prevailing American (or un-American) practice of racial discrimination caused trouble for the agency's out-placement department. In December, 1945, the Administrator reported to the Civil Service Commission that many of the agency's colored employees found it "practically impossible" to secure employment in other government offices. He cited a few examples:

REPORT OF ADMINISTRATOR

Our officer in charge of out-placement . . . found that although the State Department needed several CPC-3 messengers, they must be young, male, white and gentle. In the Weather Bureau, Department of Commerce, he was asked whether the applicants were of light complexion and told that they would not be interested in interviewing any colored applicants. The Naval Research Laboratory indicated that they had no Negro employees and had no facilities for them. The Civil Aeronautics Administration when considering an applicant asked what university she attended. When she replied Howard University, she was informed that they did not anticipate any vacancies for which she might qualify.

This is a matter of serious concern to the Office of Price Administration because of its effect upon morale of our Negro employees . . . They have given the Government their loyal services when it needed them. Both

SEGREGATION IN GOVERNMENT SERVICE



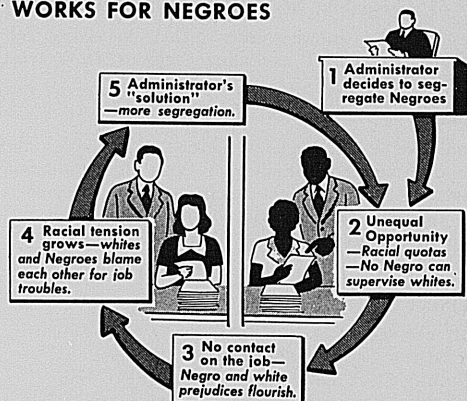
Beginnings were noted in 1909 in William Howard Taft's administration.

But Jim Crow was officially installed in 1913 under Woodrow Wilson.



Southern Congressmen agitated the white populace of the capital "to put the Negro in his place."

HOW JOB SEGREGATION WORKS FOR NEGROES



EDUCATION DOESN'T HELP



Nine out of ten Negro college graduates are employed as routine clerks. Nine out of ten whites are above clerical level.

"There shall be no discrimination on account of race"
—Act of Congress, 1940.

"...solely on merit and fitness."
—Presidential order, 1948.



BUT in most offices Negroes are still confined to menial jobs.



WHITES ARE PROMOTED—NEGROES ARE NOT



1 Two matched groups of whites and Negroes are alike in age, sex, marital status and education.



2 Assigned to same jobs, the two groups did equally well in their work.



3 But the whites got six promotions to every one of the Negroes.

in the armed services and civilian employment, they have contributed their best to win the war. They now feel that to close the doors of economic opportunities to them because of their race, is to succumb to the very evil we all fought against. The merits of their case seem clear.

It is customary to speak of the "Negro problem", and there is such a problem. But there is also a "white problem". To get a complete picture of what segregation means in the Nation's Capital, it may be helpful to see things through the eyes of a colored girl who won an unusual promotion during the war in one of the executive departments of the United States Government. Here is her story in her own words:

A COLORED GIRL'S STORY

In this office, I was the only Negro. You know, all the front offices are white, and people used to walk by our office in the hall, then come back and stare at me in amazement. I was the first Negro they had ever seen in a front office. When my promotion came through, colored girls I had never known would come up to me in the hall and congratulate me, and tell me they were all very happy for me—it must have got around by the grapevine.

At first, of course, I was very green, and I had to ask a lot of questions. Everybody in the office was eager to help me. They were just as nice as they could be about it. But from the day the man from the Civil Service Commission walked in there and talked to me about my promotion, there was tension and they wouldn't help me any more. I had two clerks who worked under me, both of them white. And I used to have to pet them up—you know, admire their new dresses and talk about their good-looking husbands and so on. They finally realized I was human, too.

I have come to the conclusion that white people are just unbelievably ignorant about Negroes. All the time I was there, the other girls would ask me questions or do things that just seemed silly to me. First, I remember, they wanted to know about my hair. What did I do to it? Did I get a permanent? And so on—and they weren't satisfied until they had touched it. And then they were surprised that it was "so soft".

One girl went to the beach and came back with a nice dark coat of tan. I put my arm beside hers and said: "Now see all the trouble you go through to get your skin the same color as mine?" And one of them piped up "Janet, can you get sunburned?" I said: "Don't you suppose the sun affects your skin the same as it does mine?" Then, one day a group of us were downtown and we all got weighed. I took a little time on the scale, and one of them said: "Get off that scale, girl, and let me on." And she pulled my arm to get me off. Then she stopped in surprise and said: "Why, your arm is soft!"

After a while, I guess all of us were a little conscious of what was happening. One day when three of us were riding home from work together, one said: "Here's a Catholic, and a Jew, and a Negro, and we like each other. Isn't that terrible!" The questions became less frequent, and we did more things together, and we talked about more ordinary things, the many things we really had in common by then. (Document 21)

Chapter 11



Shape of the Future

America is the major course of study at all levels of education.

*Superintendent of Schools
District of Columbia, Sept. 7, 1948*

A Bill of Rights Contest

When school takes up each fall, the white children in the Nation's Capital go to schools designated for whites; the colored children go to schools designated for Negroes. Often they pass each other on the way.

They can't go into the same school buildings, or learn anything at all together. They can't join in any school activity. White athletic and debating teams compete with other white teams. Negro athletic and debating teams compete with other Negro teams. But white and colored may never meet.

In the fall of 1947, the finals of the Bill of Rights oratorical contest, sponsored by the Junior Chamber of Commerce, could not be held as planned in a public school auditorium. The reason: Both white and colored pupils were competing.

Teachers Are Segregated

Teachers are also segregated. Every September, the Superintendent of Schools makes two speeches. They are identical in content, but one is made to Negro teachers, and the other to white teachers. At only two points in the school system do the races meet officially.

There is contact on the Board of Education, where Negroes are allowed minority representation. There is also contact at the point where the Negro First Assistant Superintendent reports to his superior, the white Superintendent. Below this level, principals, teachers, students, and buildings are segregated.

Inferior Colored Schools

The schools for colored children are inferior to those for whites. The buildings are older.¹ Most of them were built before the first World War.

¹ "Some Facts on School Buildings" (editorial), Washington Evening Star, Nov. 14, 1947.

A third of them were built before the Spanish-American war. A third of the buildings acquired since 1900 for colored use have been old white schools. Playgrounds, gymnasiums, athletic fields, auditoriums, class rooms, desks, maps, blackboards, shop fixtures, are inferior.

Negro schools are too few in number and too small in size. In 1947, 15 per cent of the city's colored school children were getting only part-time instruction. In the same year the schools for white children were only three-fourths filled. At the junior high school level, there were 1,800 unused spaces for white students, and not enough space for 2,243 colored students.¹

Negro schools are short of teachers. From elementary school to high school, the pupil load of Negro teachers in 1946 was 12 to 30 per cent higher than for white teachers. Most Negro teachers had 800 or more pupil-hours per week. Only one white teacher in twenty had this heavy a load.²

Segregation Means Inequality

Yet these segregated schools for colored children are supposed to be "separate and equal". If this formula could work anywhere it should be in the Nation's Capital, where an Act of Congress³ requires an apportionment of funds between white and colored schools on the basis of census reports of the school-age population.

The formula, however, has become almost meaningless. In the school year 1946-47, the white schools received \$160.21 per pupil for current operations and the Negro schools \$126.52.⁴ While the Negro schools received unusual grants for capital expenditures, these could not begin to remedy the accumulated deficiencies.

There are many technical reasons why the formula won't work. For one thing, the apportionment of school funds is based on the 1940 census. Since then, thousands of colored children have piled up in the center of the city, and thousands of white children have spread out into the suburbs beyond the District line. To make things more unequal, many Negro schools are located in the downtown areas where building costs are higher.

But the basic reason for inequality is that segregation by its nature implies a superior-inferior relationship. The services provided the dominant group are always superior to those accorded the group segregated. Otherwise there would be no segregation.

America Is The Course of Study

The inequality of segregated schools cannot be measured solely in

^{1,4} Morton, Mary E., "The Education of Negroes in the District of Columbia", Journal of Negro Education, Vol. XVI, No. 3, pp. 325-339.

² Capital View Civic Association, The Comparative Status of Negro Public Education (mimeo., 1947).

³ Act of June 25, 1864; chap. 156, sec. 18.

dollars or buildings or playgrounds. A school is more than the physical equipment that goes into it. It is more even than the formal course of study. The Superintendent of Schools made this clear recently when he said:

America is the major course of study at all levels of education. It is the central theme and motif, sometimes dominant or again subdued, running through all that goes on within the classroom. It forms the backdrop against which all educational activities take place, for the inculcation of American ideals in the youth of the Nation is the primary purpose and the solemn obligation of all who serve their country in its schools.¹

How do the schools of the Nation's Capital rate by this standard? How is "America" taught?

How "America" Is Taught

Negro teachers in Washington are not excelled in their devotion to their tasks. They have on the average higher academic qualifications for their jobs than white teachers,* and more of them regard teaching as a desirable career. But there is a limit to what they can teach their pupils about "white" America. They have been segregated themselves.

White teachers know even less about "colored" America. But this limitation doesn't matter so much to their pupils who soon get the idea that white people are on top, and that it is the business of colored people to accept a subservient role.

School officials consider it their duty to prevent any contact, curricular or otherwise, between white and colored children. Textbooks in local history and civics courses make little mention of the two races; where segregation is referred to at all, it is treated as something wholly outside the realm of discussion.

Both Negro and white teachers agree, however, that by the time their pupils reach the third or fourth grade they are fully conscious of their systematic separation, and that both groups of children understand it according to some form of master-race principle. In this way, they learn about America.

Segregation Perpetuates Itself

Many colored children begin to lose interest in school when they are old enough to realize what they are up against, and can feel the racial barriers in every walk of life. Until the age of nine or ten, they do about as well in school as white children. But then a gap appears between the races in average school performance and attendance, and continues to widen by age groups.

¹ Washington Sunday Star, School Supplement, Sept. 7, 1947.

* Dr. Robert L. Haycock, retired city Superintendent of Schools, quoted in Pittsburgh Courier, Feb. 16, 1946.

In an opposite way, white children are also denied their full right to a liberal education. Arbitrarily placed above competition with colored children, they graduate from the public schools with no conception of racial problems except as furnished by folklore and their own assumed superiority. Thus segregation perpetuates itself by denying any other frame of reference to its youthful victims, white and colored alike.

Segregation Gets a Degree

Beyond the public schools, in the field of higher education, segregation digs its trenches, divides the youth according to doctrines of blood and skin, and returns the racial product to society, equipped with an academic degree.

A few blocks west of the White House is George Washington University with 15,000 students. This school boasts of the unique cultural advantages afforded by its nearness to the seat of government, and makes every effort to attract foreign students. But no American Negro will be admitted. Not even a West Indian Negro, as the Minister from Haiti discovered a few years ago when he tried to enroll his son with the aid of State Department influence.¹

At 37th Street, near the Potomac River, is Georgetown University, with 5,000 students. It is run by the Jesuit Order, and admits members of all faiths, including Jews. But no Negroes have ever been admitted,* although from 1873 to 1882 the President of this University was a Negro.

American University is also in the city. But in spite of its name, it admits colored Americans only to night classes in its off-campus school of Social Sciences and Public Affairs. It is run by the Methodists.

The only "white" college that does not discriminate against Negroes in the capital is Catholic University, which lifted its color bar a few years ago. The experiment in equal opportunity has proved successful, and Negroes are now admitted without excitement to almost all phases of university life. In June 1947, three hundred of the four thousand students were colored.

Back To The First Grade

It is an odd fact that racial discrimination in the colleges goes back to the first grade for its justification. In defending the exclusion of Negroes, the President of George Washington University has cited what he calls "the precedent" of the public schools.² So do they all, all the honorable segregators in the Nation's Capital, point to the example of the Jim Crow school system. It has been cited by:

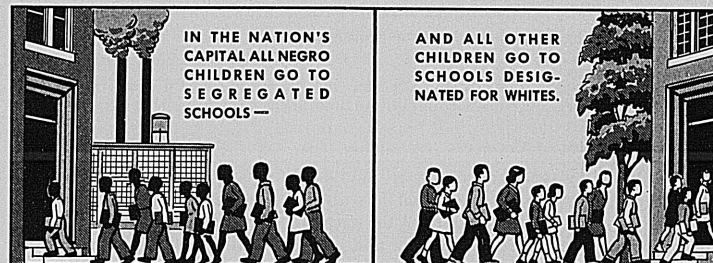
1. The District Recreation Board, in raising a color bar around its playground swings and teeter-totters.

¹ Document U18.

* Since this study was made three Negroes have been admitted to the Law School.

² Washington Council of Social Agencies, Report on Racial Relations, 1946, p. II-C-22.

CAPITAL'S JIM CROW SCHOOLS



OLD BUILDINGS



Negro schools are housed in older buildings—



And facilities are inferior to white schools.

CROWDED NEGRO SCHOOLS



In 1946-47 white schools were only three-quarters filled—



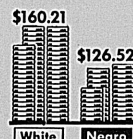
While 15 per cent of all colored children received only part-time instruction.

SHORTAGE OF TEACHERS



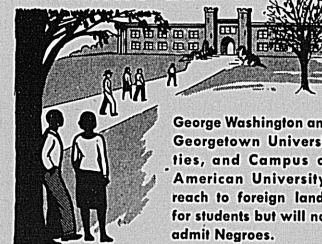
The pupil load of Negro teachers is from 12 to 30 per cent higher than white teachers.

SCHOOL FUNDS

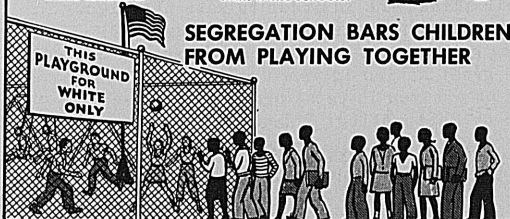


In 1946-47 Negro schools received less operating funds per pupil than white schools.

HIGHER EDUCATION IN NATION'S CAPITAL



George Washington and Georgetown Universities, and Campus of American University, reach to foreign lands for students but will not admit Negroes.



SEGREGATION BARS CHILDREN FROM PLAYING TOGETHER

When the flag of the United States goes up on a city playground in the capital today, children are forced apart by color. When the flag of the United States goes down, they play together without bigotry.

2. The Daughters of the American Revolution in refusing the use of Constitution Hall for a concert by pianist Hazel Scott.
3. A leading department store, in refusing to serve Negroes at its soda fountain.
4. The manager of a downtown theater, in refusing to allow a Negro air corps sergeant to see a picture on military aviation.

A Responsibility of Congress

In many ways, the color bar in the public schools is basic to discrimination elsewhere. Education has always been central to Americans. The public school system has been the great instrument by which we hoped to overcome inequalities of birth and station, and give each American an equal chance to make good. It has been the great unifying principle of the Republic.

When the public schools of the capital are used instead to divide citizens on racial lines, to perpetuate inequalities, to increase them, and worse, to justify them, then the time has come to consider what kind of an America we want to build for the future.

This is a matter within the particular responsibility of Congress because the public schools are the only place where the segregation of citizens in the capital has the sanction of law. Almost eighty years ago, the popularly elected City Councils of Washington petitioned Congress to abolish segregation in the schools, and gave the following reasons:

Whereas, Slavery Has Been Abolished

PETITION OF THE CITY COUNCILS approved May 2, 1870

Whereas, by proclamation and amendments to the Constitution of the United States, slavery has been forever abolished and forbidden in these United States, and all men have been declared to be citizens of the United States, whether native born or naturalized; and

Whereas, we believe that eradicating the word "white" from all laws and ordinances is the only sure way of breaking down the barrier of unjust prejudices against men on account of the color of their skins; and in order to have the higher and more profound principles implanted in the hearts of the young and rising generation, who are to govern and control the affairs of this great Nation in years to come, and at the same time know that no citizen is to be proscribed on account of his color or nationality: Therefore

Be it resolved, that the Senate Committee on the District be respectfully and earnestly requested to report and secure,

if possible, the passage of a bill for the reorganization of the public schools in the District of Columbia to give us one common school system by which all children can be educated, regardless of their color . . .

Congress disregarded the City Councils' petition of 1870 for a common school system, and a few years later abolished representative government in the District. The alternatives are sharply presented. Do we want to set up in the Nation's Capital the goal of a free society, or its opposite?

In 1946, the retiring Superintendent of Schools was quoted as saying:

Yes, I believe that children get greater benefits in an integrated system. Such a system could possibly be effected in Washington.¹

¹ Dr. Robert L. Haycock, quoted in Pittsburgh Courier, Feb. 16, 1946.

Chapter 12



When the Flag Goes Up

Whenever whites and Negroes have had an opportunity to work or play together, they have done so with virtually no friction.

Washington Post, Sept. 24, 1945

Looking Through a Fence

The men who enforce the segregation of colored citizens in the Nation's Capital go all the way. They reach down to the playgrounds, and keep children from playing together.

At First and New York Avenue, N. W., in the heart of a largely Negro area, is a school with an enrollment of nearly 1,000 Negro children. The school does not have a single square inch of play space. Across the street is a city playground—"No Negroes Allowed."

"I have often sat in classrooms," reports a former student, "and watched this fenced-in playground being used by a handful of white children playing baseball, while scores of Negro children peered through the fence with longing glances."¹

The Recreation Board

In 1947, the District of Columbia Recreation Board turned down a petition to permit colored children to use the Park View playground, the only playground in a predominantly Negro area. One Negro girl who tried to play on the swings was ordered off by the supervisor, and when she refused to leave was picked up bodily and carried out to the street.²

The Board also prevents white children from playing with colored children. Not long ago a vacant space in a Negro area on Florida Avenue was set aside as a playground. For some time both white and colored children played there without supervision. But when the Board discovered what was happening, it placed a Negro supervisor on the lot to chase the white children away.³

¹ Document 42C.

² Pittsburgh Courier, July 26, 1947.

³ Document 46C.

When the flag of the United States goes up on a city playground in the capital today, children are forced apart by color. When the flag of the United States goes down, they play together without bigotry.

Democracy on Vacant Lots

In the days before play was supervised, democracy flourished on the vacant lots. "White and colored boys and men used to play ball together on the vacant lots south of the White House," recalls one old-timer. "All of us swam in the Potomac and Rock Creek." There were many such places.

OLD JUDICIARY SQUARE

For many years, Old Judiciary Square (3rd and F Streets, N.W.) was an old unsupervised play field. All elements of the population participated in games on a voluntary basis. . . . Then it was organized as a unit of the Department of Playgrounds. Immediately the Negro patrons were barred from the premises.¹ . . .

A LOT IN SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON

On a vacant lot in Southwest Washington, people of all races and ages living in the neighborhood played marbles, horseshoes, and baseball. There were no supervisors, no fights, no fences. One year later, the ground became part of the playground system. Negro boys sat on the curbstone and mused anent the sudden quirks of democracy, while their white friends continued to participate in the organized activities. Fights and property damage were frequent. The following year, when the playground was again unsupervised, everybody played. There was no friction.²

Segregation Is Not "Natural"

Today even the marble games are supervised. In the annual city tournament conducted under the auspices of the National Amateur Athletic Union, colored boys aren't allowed to play with white boys. The city chooses a "white" marble champion and a "colored" marble champion, and without any play-off, the white boy is selected to represent Washington in the national championship. Colored boys from other cities have won the national title.

There is nothing "natural" about segregation in Washington. The local branch of the N.A.A.U. prohibits mixed matches in sports events under penalty of revoking amateur status. But in professional games, where gate receipts are decisive, there is no color bar.

Professional football games between mixed teams are very popular. Colored fans can watch Satchel Paige pitch to the Senators at Griffith Stadium. In professional boxing matches, a Negro can knock a white

¹, ² Henderson, E. B., and Anderson, F. J., Recreation and Race Adjustment in Washington, D. C., 1944.

man clear out of the ring and be cheered for his prowess. As one Washington newspaper observed:

Whenever whites and Negroes have had an opportunity to work or play together, they have done so with virtually no friction. The experience has been a wholly heartening one. It is an experience resented only by bigots and feared only by the victims of senseless superstitions. Most Americans, given the chance, will be ready to live and let live, ready to observe the doctrines of fair play.¹

On Any Summer Afternoon

There are still areas in Washington, beyond the reach of the District Recreation Board, where the American flag does not stand for race bigotry.

On any summer afternoon, on the federally operated tennis courts near the Capitol on Pennsylvania Avenue, dozens of Negro and white adults can be seen playing tennis, often with one another. Large interracial picnics of labor unions and other organizations are held at federally-controlled Rock Creek Park.

But the District Recreation Board has been conducting an all-out campaign to gain control of all Federal recreational facilities in the District of Columbia with the intent of operating them on a Jim Crow basis. So far, these plans have been blocked by the Department of the Interior. However, the Board is now trying to get the properties transferred to it by Act of Congress.

The Policy Makers

Who are the members of the District Recreation Board? Of the seven members, four are appointed by the District Commissioners to represent the "public interest". These citizen members are as follows:

The chairman is a former president of the Federation of Citizens' Associations, a leader in the restrictive covenant movement, a man who has been devoted to segregating colored people in Washington.

The vice-chairman is a prominent real estate operator, who is committed to the segregation policies of the Washington Real Estate Board. The third citizen member is the wife of the executive vice-president of one of the city's large real estate companies. The fourth citizen member is a colored woman, who is consistently out-voted on the segregation issue.

A "BENEVOLENT DICTATORSHIP"

Home Rule Is Lost

Once upon a time, in the years prior to the Civil War, the white people of Washington enjoyed varying forms of home rule. But after the war, to keep Negroes from becoming equal citizens, a large number of these white people were willing to give up their own democratic rights. At their request, Congress abolished representative government in the District.

¹ Washington Post, Sept. 24, 1945.

IN THE SENATE, 1874

I understand that there are many people in the District who are willing to be disfranchised for the purpose of getting clear of the colored vote.

Senator Morton
Republican of Indiana

Since 1874, the residents of Washington have been without any kind of suffrage or local control over their own affairs. They are, in the words of Congressman Kefauver of Tennessee, in the same category as "felons, aliens, and federally supported Indians . . ."

The "Friends of Court"

Officially the city is run as a "benevolent dictatorship" by three commissioners, appointed by the President. But unofficially it is run by the "friends of court", the dominant real estate, commercial and financial interests, formally organized as the Board of Trade. "When the Board of Trade cracks the whip, the District Government jumps."²

IN THE HOUSE, 1948

It is the Washington Board of Trade which now rules Washington. This organization, a glorified chamber of commerce, represents the business, banking, and, to some extent, the professional interests in Washington. It has a membership of about 8,000, only about 1 per cent of the population of the District. A substantial number of this membership live outside the District. The board of trade, by any standard of measurement, is the most powerful single organization in Washington. Its board of directors, numbering 40 powerful men, determine its policies and actions. . . . Quite naturally, the board of trade is against this bill."³ . . .

Representative Deane
Democrat of North Carolina

These are the special interests which have planned the segregation of Negroes in housing, jobs, theaters, restaurants, parks, and playgrounds. For the most part they are satisfied with the status quo. There is only one argument on which minority government can be maintained in the capital and everyone knows what it is—the necessity of keeping down the Negro.

A Tradition of Home-Rule

It is not easy for Americans to give up their tradition of representative government. No sooner had home-rule been lost in the last century than a movement was started to get it back. For a generation, committees of Congress have conducted hearings on the subject. Almost everybody has been interested.

¹ Kefauver, E. and Levin, J. A., Twentieth Century Congress, 1947.

² Congressional Record, Vol. 94, No. 94, May 25, 1948, p. 6576.

Even the middle-class Federation of Citizens' Associations, which pushed the geographical segregation of the Negro, has endorsed home-rule. Many of its leaders have been jealous of the dominance of the Board of Trade. The Board of Trade itself, which wants to "postpone" home-rule in favor of "national representation", agreed to hold a plebiscite in 1946 on two questions:

1. Do you want the right to vote for officials of your own city government in the District of Columbia?
2. Do you want the right to vote for President of the United States and for members of Congress from the District of Columbia?

Results of Plebiscite

The plebiscite had a great build-up. Newspapers printed large maps showing the location of polling places. So great was the national interest that all radio networks arranged for frequent returns on election night. Private concerns and government offices allowed employees time off to vote.

But only one person in five voted. Only 68 per cent of the votes were for home-rule, compared to 90 per cent in a similar plebiscite in 1938. Only 81 per cent were even for national representation, compared to 93 per cent before. "Opposition to suffrage is on the increase," reported the Washington Times-Herald.¹

The Washington Post called the increasing negative vote "altogether dismaying", and suggested that deep social causes were responsible. "Disfranchisement," it concluded, "is a poisonous thing."²

Freedom Cannot Be Divided

Even more significant were the results of a separate plebiscite conducted in the city's segregated high schools. More than 71,000 students, representing 71 per cent of the total enrollment, took part. Negro students voted overwhelmingly for both national and local suffrage. But white students, while favoring national suffrage, voted against local self-government by a majority of 1,179 votes.³

In Washington, we are raising a generation of Negro children who are in favor of democracy, and of white children who are afraid of it. It is only by freeing colored people from their disadvantages that the white people of the capital can be free.

"As I would not be a slave," said Abraham Lincoln, "so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs from this, to the extent of the difference, is no democracy."

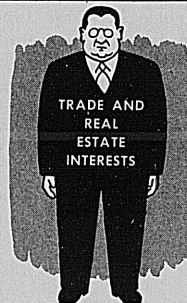
¹ The Washington Times-Herald, November 6, 1946.

² ³ The Washington Post, November 6, 1946.

THE "INTERESTS" BEHIND SEGREGATION

DOMINATES HOUSING IN NATION'S CAPITAL

The local Real Estate Board has control over real estate transactions. Its members include twenty-five banks, insurance and title companies, and building and loan associations. The Board of Trade dominates the district's housing through civic groups.



BARS NEGROES FROM NEW HOUSING

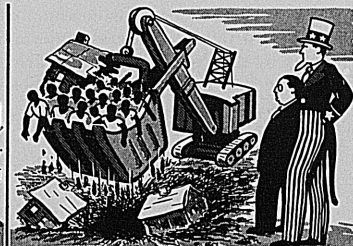


Real estate "interests" bar Negroes from new developments as a matter of policy.

PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS TIGHTEN SEGREGATION



Good-sized Negro communities have been taken over to develop "exclusive" white districts. This further reduces available Negro housing.

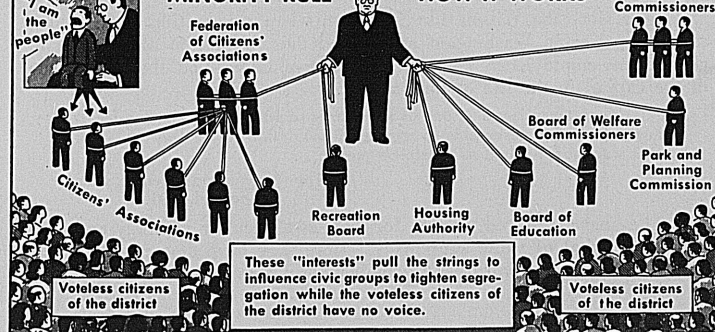


Hundreds of Negro families have been displaced from areas cleared for government buildings, parks, schools and highway systems.



MINORITY RULE
Federation of Citizens' Associations

—HOW IT WORKS



CAPITAL OF WHITE SUPREMACY

What Sumner Said

It has been a long time since President Lincoln signed the Act of Congress abolishing slavery in the capital. But what Senator Sumner said to him before the Bill was signed in March of 1862 still applies.

"Do you know who is at this moment the largest slave-holder in the United States?" Senator Sumner asked the President. And Sumner answered: "It is Abraham Lincoln, for he holds all three thousand slaves in the District of Columbia, which is more than any other person in the District holds."

At this moment the Federal government is holding more citizens in bondage than any single person or agency in the country. It is responsible because it, and it alone, has the power to break the chains that bar a quarter of a million Negroes in Washington from their equal rights as Americans.

Worse, the government has helped to make the chains. Its District courts have been used, unconstitutionally as it now appears, to force colored people into ghettos. Its lending, housing, and planning agencies have been drawn into the general undertaking. Its District Commissioners, appointed by the President, and its various other officers, have helped maintain the color bar in municipal agencies, schools, hospitals, and recreational facilities.

An Irony of History

I wanted this position so I could keep Washington a segregated city.

Senator Theodore G. Bilbo
Speech at Meridian, Miss., May 8, 1946

It is a long way from Abraham Lincoln to Senator Bilbo, who became chairman of the Senate District committee in 1944. As ex-officio "Mayor of Washington", the first thing Bilbo did was to go to Mississippi and inform the state legislature that he had everything under control. In his last campaign in 1946, he called upon his constituents to reelect him to keep Washington a segregated city.

Ever since the Wilson administration when race-baiting congressmen came to power in Washington and forced the segregation of Negroes in government employment, men like Bilbo have understood the importance of the capital in the life of the nation.

It must be viewed as one of the ironies of history that the Confederacy, which was never able to capture Washington during the course of that war, now holds it as a helpless pawn . . .

The Washington Evening Star
Sept. 4, 1946

They have captured the city for their own peculiar ideology and held it as the capital of white supremacy. Here they have demonstrated their racial theories to the world, and gone home to brag about it.

Where Is Everybody?

What have other congressmen been doing? In the entire year of 1947, not a single instance was noted in any of the city's metropolitan papers of a speech or a public statement of a congressman that was critical of the color bar in the capital. A few stray items appeared in a Negro newspaper published in Pittsburgh.

1. A senator from Rhode Island was reported to be "incensed" when a Negro law school professor in his company was refused service at a leading Washington hotel.
2. A senator from Utah was reported to have made a speech before a Washington church group in which he attacked race prejudice as incompatible with the American way of life.
3. A representative from Wisconsin was reported to have been shocked to hear that Negro physicians were barred from practice in all but one of Washington's hospitals.

Responding To The Challenge

Only by responding to the challenge can Americans who believe in equal rights recover the capital they have lost. Only by using the power vested in Congress in behalf of the nation and the nation's principles can the city of Washington be restored to its original destiny.

It will take something of the spirit of a century ago when the capital was on the conscience of the nation, and petitions by the thousands poured in on Congress demanding freedom for all people in the District of Columbia.

It will take something of the spirit of old John Quincy Adams, leader of the fight in the House of Representatives, who noted in his diary when the gag-rule against anti-slavery petitions was finally broken: "Blessed, forever blessed, be the name of God."



ONE NATION INDIVISIBLE

One of my acquaintances, a Swede, expressed well my opinion when he asked: "Cannot you Americans even make your capital city into a model of what your nation professes to be?"

Visitor from Denmark

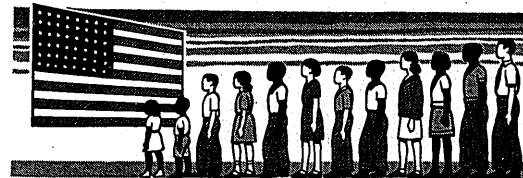
When people are divided by a master-race theory, liberty and justice are impossible. Nowhere is this plainer than in the capital, where one-quarter of the population is segregated according to color. Here we have been building ghettos of the mind, body, and spirit.

The physical ghettos are the most obvious of all. They breed disease and crime, and give racism a base by the Lincoln Memorial. The ghettos of the mind have darker passages. They are built behind the walls of the segregated school system where children are taught not to know each other. They extend into the universities, into the minds of educators, doctors, and divines.

The ghettos of the spirit are hardest to define, but their darkness is the worst. These are blank spaces in a common humanity where men step on each other and take pride and profit in doing so. These are the ghettos that cramp the soul of the nation in the place of its pride, and lessen the meaning of its life.

In the Nation's Capital, we must mean what we say, and give people of all races and colors an equal chance to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. We must arrange it so that children, both white and colored, can stand together as they look to the Stars and Stripes, and recite:

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation Indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for All.



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